

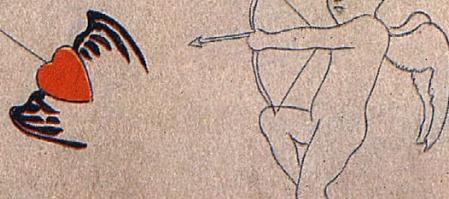
"THE UNEXPECTED" by Charles Caldwell Dobie--A COMPLETE
SHORT NOVEL

The SMART SET

*A Magazine of
Cleverness*



"The Pernicious Influence"
by Lilith Benda
A really remarkable short story
"Should a Pretty Woman Eat?"
by Frank Pease
An impudent little essay



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The SMART SET

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A HUNDRED BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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THE SMART SET

"... Angels Could Do No More"

THE CHOICE

By Lady Dorothy Walpole

HE danced badly. In fact, had he not been a millionaire, one would have said that he lumbered like an elephant. After a few rounds she drew him from the crowd, and they leaned against a pillar, watching the scene.

She remembered the last time she had danced. It had been in Paris with the boy with the dark eyes that were almost too beautiful for a man . . . in that *baroque* tavern in Montmartre. She had been wearing an old frock rather the worse for the night's adventures. All round them on the red settees couples sat, flushed, laughing, loving. She told the boy that she loved him better than all the world; and she had meant it. He bent and kissed her hand, his lips wet with champagne. In a corner the swarthy band played a *valse chaloupée*, crazily, that made tumult in the blood of those that listened. Sometimes a paper streamer or a gaily coloured celluloid ball stung their faces. Sometimes a pretty girl with bistrod eyes bothered them to buy peaches. The air had been warm with laughter and light love and smelt of patchouli and verveine. And the faces through the haze of smoke had been flushed and Bacchic. . . .

Here the air smelt of roses and gilding. The faces were fresh and cold; and it seemed as if the pates of many had worn thin with the weight of impalpable coronets. She had supped with royalty, who had paid her impudent compliments in vile English. One felt, rather than saw, the police protection and security of wealth. Nothing wild and sweet and mad could penetrate. The strip of red carpet downstairs in the hall was symbolic.

She knew she was looking her very best. Her ethereal white frock with its sparkling ornaments was a dream of taste and grace, and her thin white fingers glittered as she moved them. From the third finger of her left hand an enormous solitaire diamond blinked at her like a live thing.

She glanced at the justly self-confident, well-valeted bulk of the man at her side. She made a mental note of correction regarding the size of his diamond waistcoat buttons. He was looking at her with an air of possessive pride. She smiled up at him and looked once more at the splendour of gilding and roses and tiaras. . . .

She decided that she had chosen the better part.

DISILLUSION

By Harold Hersey

*(You have been a voice upon the silent waters,
The shadow of a sail in hidden harbors,
An echo in the richly fruited arbors
Of my soul.)*

OFF where the mystic forms of dreams arise
 Beyond the circlet of the sunset's hue,
Past all the wealth of worlds and paradise,
 Past suns and stars and all the skies—to you.

This endless edifice of unknown things
 Shall stop me not, nor hinder what I do,
For I have taken Fate's unfolded wings
 And mount the steps of Time to wing to you.

Through darkness of the stilled and starry night,
 Through shades that gather 'round the setting sun,
I take my lonely and untiring flight,
 For Fate will tremble when your love is won.

Through loops of mellow light that transcend space,
 Up from the bounds of shadeless sky I rise,
And through the mists close watch your mirrored face
 And stand within the shadow of your eyes.

*(You have been a voice upon the silent waters,
The shadow of a sail in hidden harbors,
An echo in the richly fruited arbors
Of my soul.)*

A sensuous silence falls, all fades behind,
 I've passed the fringes of the heavens through,
My dream has spread its wing upon the wind;
 Ah, surely this dim shadow is not you?

I've drunk Life's spirit wine within your eyes,
 And tasted lips still trembling with our fire,
I've hearkened to your heart's unuttered sighs
 And breathed the air of passionate desire.

Why lies the image shattered at my feet?
 Why must the echo vanish with my song?
Ah, but the memory is bitter-sweet,
 We know the truth yet we go on and on.

*(You have been a voice upon the silent waters,
The shadow of a sail in hidden harbors,
An echo in the richly fruited arbors
Of my soul.)*

THE UNEXPECTED

By Charles Caldwell Dobie

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL discomfort came with consciousness; I rose, my head swimming and weariness in every muscle. My clothes were torn, my hat missing, and a warm trickle of blood dripped from my lip. A sudden nausea sent me reeling toward the curb. I sat down. What had happened? What was I, George Winfield, doing along the deserted docks of San Francisco, coming to painful consciousness like a drunken sailor, picked clean, and flung in the gutter?

I had left my lodgings at dusk; this much I remembered distinctly. And I had wandered aimlessly, as most lonely men do, until, before I was aware, my steps had turned toward the waterfront, then—Yes, now it all came back—the man in the ulster, the touring-car, the—

I remembered leaning against a telegraph pole, watching rather incuriously a man in a gray ulster walking restlessly up and down the Embarcadero. The head-light of a touring-car next flashed upon the scene. Then the man in the gray ulster came out of the gloom, halted the car, and began to address a man in the rear seat, who stood up, hat in hand, with some show of deference. The conversation was long and animated. There had been much waving of hands, and quite a display of, what I took to be, temper. But in the dusk I got only an indistinct view of the pantomime, reinforced by an occasional highly pitched retort.

Suddenly, somebody struck a blow; there was a general mixup, and the man in the gray ulster was thrown to the ground by a quick start of the automo-

bile. I began to run in the direction of the stunned figure. The car stopped instantly. The next thing I knew the man in the gray ulster was being dragged into the automobile and I was in the thick of the fight.

But the scrimmage was brief. There came a sense of confused struggle, a realization that I was clutching frantically at the victim's ulster in a desperate effort to drag him from his captors, my head swam, and the lights of the machine failed as quickly as if a gust of wind had blown them out.

So much for the performance. What was to be the aftermath? I looked about. At my feet lay a thick grey ulster, and, a little to one side, a small memorandum-book sprawled in the mud. I reached over and picked them both up; effort toward a rescue had been futile, but the fact that I had been strenuous enough to retain these souvenirs tempered failure.

A white fog was creeping in from the Bay, submerging the coal-bunker's huge skeletons and blotting out the harbor lights. I shivered dismally as I rose a second time to my feet. A Howard Street car rounded the curve. I waved at it and stumbled aboard.

"Knock-out drops?" queried the mortician genially.

"Just plain drunk," grunted the conductor, as he reached for my fare.

I smiled with sickly heroism. "Let me off at Third," I announced wearily, as I crumpled into a corner.

They let me off at Third Street, and I got to my room somehow—that cold, naked, inhospitable room, that had driven me abroad on a damp, clammy

night. I threw the ulster and the memorandum-book on the bed and opened the window. Then I bathed my face until the cold water made my blood tingle. The exertion revived me.

I sat down upon the bed and began to investigate the ulster. My search revealed a silk muffler, a hotel key, a pouch of tobacco, and a letter. The address on the envelope bore the following direction :

MR. ARTHUR HANBURY,
HOTEL HAMPTON,
CITY.

The letter was dated San Francisco, and read as follows :

My dear friend:

From the newspapers I learn that you are among the latest arrivals from New York, and now I know that my disconnected appeals have reached you.

It seems almost incredible, now that I look back, to think that you could have appreciated my position and made this move to help me—you who are a stranger! And, yet, I am using this term literally, for you have lived so vividly in my brother's praise of you, that I have been able to prop my failing courage with the knowledge of this tie. You were always in his thoughts, and the old days at Harvard were firmly woven into his life.

Now that you are here, I can scarcely control my impatience, but I must move more cautiously than ever. It is their custom to allow me a drive every day, and if you see me at all, it will be when I take this airing.

I fancied when you came that a quick, decisive blow would complete my rescue. This was a fool's paradise, and I know now that the battle has only commenced.

I leave the house every day at four o'clock, and if you can be there I shall know that you are ready to aid me. Take the cars to Oceanside and drop off at a small hotel and saloon called "The Turnpike House." Leading to the west, half a block from this roadhouse, you will find a road, which straggles out

into a mere trail through the sand-hills to the ocean.

Follow both road and trail until you reach the top of the first considerable sand-hill. In the hollow to the south you will come upon a thickly planted grove of eucalyptus trees. Their appearance is deceitful, as they hide both the house and carriage road leading to it, but plunge into them and you will find my present home.

The house is enclosed with a high hedge of cypress, but there are breaks enough in it to permit you to hide yourself. How to sense your presence is a puzzle, but I must trust to whatever impulse prompts.

I have before me a stick-pin which my brother so often wore before his death—a gift from you. It is a four-leaf clover, set with emeralds. Do you remember it? I am absurd and feminine enough to cherish it as a good-luck trinket.

I have no notion what steps you will take to help me, but I feel confident that you will succeed.

*Until I see you, my dear friend, I am,
Expectantly,
Carmelita.*

I read the letter over twice, laid it aside, picked it up a third time. My hopes for a clew were more than realized, but instead of a dry, dull, impersonal letter, which, at its best, might help me locate a friend or an associate of the kidnapped man, I found something colored with romance and bearing directly on the scene I had just quitted. Apparently Arthur Hanbury was a stranger in San Francisco, brought here by previous appeals from the author of this letter. The writer's plight seemed desperate, she appeared to be held a prisoner; how, or where, or by whom, I could only conjecture.

Pacing the room, my strides were accompanied by equally disjointed thoughts; the more I tried to grasp the situation, the more it eluded me. At first Carmelita's note seemed clear. She was restrained illegally; Hanbury had come to rescue her. What connection,

if any, was there between the strange scene I had just quitted and the predicament of the lady responsible for this letter? Had Hanbury played his cards recklessly and lost?

To ask the authorities for help seemed imprudent. Had such a step been expedient, Carmelita would have taken it long ago. However much the law might help Hanbury's dilemma, it would not solve the lady's problem, and I must confess that she made more of an appeal.

There was still the memorandum-book to consult, but its contents proved unintelligible. Charming sketches, fragmentary but spirited, covered its pages. It was doubtless the property of an artist, who, in a journey abroad had caught and registered glimpses of the people among whom he traveled—a group of Breton peasants; the dashing figure of a Spanish señorita in a swirling dance; a troupe of carnival figures sweeping by, full of verve and abandon. Some of the sketches were dated, some were amplified by scant notes, but nothing indicated the artist.

I tried, now, to fix the kidnapped man's face in my memory, but only a dim, fog-enshrouded figure came to mind. Standing before a mirror I slipped his ulster on again, thinking to strengthen the picture by pulling up the collar and thrusting my hands into its pockets.

How the idea first came to me I do not know, but suddenly a glint of light reflected by the hotel key on the table flamed my imagination. Then for the first time I realized that the ulster was an uncommonly good fit. I picked up the key and turned it over in my hand, studying the metal tag attached to it, hardly to encourage the suggestions which it stirred:

Hotel Hampton, Room 602.

This was the key to Hanbury's room; why not also to the situation?

I thought of the gentleman in the gray ulster skulking along the deserted docks, of shadowy ghost-like forms carrying an insensible prisoner into the white fog, of Carmelita languishing somewhere like an enchanted princess

of chivalry, and this romance, blown as quickly and as full of color as a soap bubble, became a reality.

I thrust my hands into my pockets and drew out a heap of small silver—a slender hoard which stood between me and poverty. For four years I had been drifting about in search of fortune or whatever vague adventure beckons youth so insistently. I was returning to the home of my youth disappointed, disillusioned, without plans for the future. Now, suddenly, the dreariness of my outlook was lit by chance. This secret was mine to unravel! Caution or reason had no place in such a situation. Even the difficulties of my task did not alarm me. I was young, lacked an inch of six feet, and had a digestion sound enough to support enthusiasm. Hanbury wore a mustache, I a beard; a barber could remedy this discrepancy. Furthermore, he was a stranger in San Francisco, and no doubt had been at the hotel too short a time to leave any definite impression. My lack of money, the fact that Hanbury might be suddenly released by his captors, or the chance of being recognized or denounced hardly occurred to me.

Hanbury had left me an ulster, a room at the hotel and an unsolved mystery. How could I turn back when romance pointed with so sure a finger?

CHAPTER II

It was ten o'clock when I halted before the Hotel Hampton, knocking ashes from my cigar with nervous indecision. Up to this point enthusiasm had carried me along on its flood tide, but at the crucial moment I had some misgivings. Market Street was brilliant, despite the night's clinging dampness, but its gaiety confused me. Lights twinkled everywhere, throwing their reflection joyfully down on the damp asphalt pavements; carriages and automobiles rolled and raced over the slippery surface.

Entering the hotel lobby, I surveyed myself in a convenient mirror. The barber had been skillful, reducing a

stubby beard to the gentility of a mustache. I had supplemented the ulster with a soft gray hat that slouched enough to shade my eyes, and a pair of gray gloves added a convincing touch. Altogether, I felt a measure of satisfaction and assurance.

Gripping my suit-case, I went up to the desk. "Any mail?" I ventured.

The clerk stared and cleared his throat.

"Hanbury," I added hastily.

He turned away, smiling apologetically, and came back with a negative answer.

I was walking toward the elevator when his voice arrested me.

"Mr. Hanbury!" he called. I swung back. "There was a man in here three or four times asking for you. I wasn't sure whether you were about the hotel or not. It's best to leave your key at the office when you go out."

He handed me a card. I read the name. "Cyrus Stuart, M. D.," and turned with an air of impatience toward him.

"Doctor Stuart? Did he leave any word? I wonder where I could catch him."

"Doctor Stuart usually has a midnight supper at Techau's," he said nonchalantly.

"Then you know him?"

"Everybody knows Doctor Stuart. He's one of the big guns. Want a boy for your grip?"

I had been wondering how to find Hanbury's room without creating suspicion. "Yes, I was just looking about for one," I remarked casually, and, entering the elevator, I was shown to Hanbury's apartments.

Left alone, I stood like a belated visitor awaiting his host's arrival. The suite consisted of a sleeping apartment and living-room, separated by folding-doors. A trunk, open and showing signs of upheaval, stood in the center of the main room, and articles of clothing were strewn over the chairs. These evidences of careless occupation almost shook my determination. The personal note suggested by Hanbury's effects

made me realize that I was an intruder, but at the same time I felt very strongly that if I were to be of service either to the lady or Hanbury, sensibilities must be ignored.

Throwing my ulster aside, I began to investigate. The clothing evidenced wealth and good taste; a simple but sufficient toilet-set graced the bureau; a novel or two upon a table bore the stamp of the railway train. The ice broken, I folded up Hanbury's scattered garments and adjusted the contents of the trunk. The process, simple enough, impressed me strangely. I felt almost like a ghoul, picking over the spoils of a victim. At last, the apartments in comparative order, I sat down to consider the task confronting me, and to sum up my resources.

First of all, what assurance had I that some of my old associates would not recognize me? Four years ago I had left the city in which I had been reared, a city peculiar for very general friendships. Still, four years in the wilderness had made its mark, and I was changed, and I had no relatives to either cheer or hamper me. My occupation had been commonplace—clerking for a bank—therefore, I would not be handicapped by local prominence. My friends remembered me as a smooth-shaven, obscure bank clerk. I was returning with a mustache, a name that augured some distinction, and perhaps a profession. As to Hanbury's connections in California, I could only conjecture. There was a chance that he was making his first trip West, but I had no assurance that he did not possess friends here. As it was, this Doctor Stuart had called three times in one night for him.

Again, how soon would Hanbury be freed, and what would be his attitude toward me? Here lay my chief risk, but this very element of chance gave the situation piquancy. At every step I should be waiting for him to enter and announce himself, and whether I should find his arrival welcome depended on how much diversion my new rôle afforded.

It was strange how clearly and convincingly the figures in the mystery rose before me—Hanbury, Carmelita, and, as a matter of course, her prison keeper! And yet how foolhardy was my adventure, founded upon a passing suspicion, supplemented by a letter vague enough to be capable of innumerable constructions! In the space of four hours my life was colored as never before. Mad, impulsively foolish, what you will, I was caught by a woman's appeal, and to whatever end I drifted, the current carrying me at least would be swift.

My first move was an effort to locate this singular Doctor Stuart, whose habits were either whimsical or notorious enough to be generally known. If he had supper every night at Techau's, why should I not begin at once to look him up?

My clothing, none too prosperous looking at best, was totally ruined by my encounter. Obviously, I could not present myself at a fashionable café in any such costume. I looked over Hanbury's wardrobe and decided on a dark blue suit and clean linen, but to bring myself to the point of discarding my own clothes for Hanbury's took no little effort. This raised the question as to whether I could not work as effectively without impersonating Hanbury. But as George Winfield, what could I accomplish? Would I hear from Carmelita, or could I track her captor as effectively? Then, was there not a point to be gained by confronting the conspirators with a second Hanbury?

At eleven o'clock, I stepped out of the hotel, arrayed in Hanbury's figurative purple and fine linen. The fog had lifted since I entered the hotel, and the street was deserted except for an occasional automobile rolling from the theater. I walked briskly toward Techau Tavern, longing for companionship and gaiety. If the street was deserted, the café was not, and it was with some difficulty that I secured a table, but I flattered myself that I presented something of an air in my borrowed

plumage, for the steward himself found me a seat.

After four years in the wilderness, it was not hard to surrender to the charms of such a scene, and I leaned back with a comfortable sigh, soothed by the pleasant softness of lighted tables and the gay, full-throated chatter rising above the music of the orchestra. At a table opposite me a party were just seating themselves, and one of the women, attracted by something near my table, crossed over and lifted her lorgnette. Her curiosity aroused mine, and, turning about, I saw that she was studying a poster which advertised a Charity Ball Masque.

"Aren't you cheapening this Charity Ball of yours by such a lurid announcement?" she said to her escort, who had followed her.

"Didn't it attract *you*?" he asked.

She let her lorgnette drop with a scornful shrug. "Yes—but—"

"What higher praise could one want for its effectiveness?" he interrupted.

She smiled. "And who is responsible for the creation?"

The gentleman smiled. "I regret to plead guilty."

She drew back protestingly. "You?"

"Then you never suspected the worst? Never knew that I carried a sketch-book everywhere? Wait, I'll show you what I can do on the wing, when I've a mind to."

He began to search his pockets, but not finding what he wished, he sent a waiter scampering for his overcoat.

"I can't understand," I heard him say as he brushed back to his seat. "I'm sure I had it this afternoon."

The waiter hovered obsequiously about him. "You have lost something? Perhaps it slipped from the coat in the check-room. I might—"

He tossed the overcoat back to the waiter. "Oh! It's of no great importance, but it won't do any harm to look. Just a small red book with sketches in it." He indicated the size with extended fingers. "About so large."

CHAPTER III

"Just a small red book with sketches in it!" I put my cigar down and looked keenly at the man who had finished speaking. He had very black hair and a complexion swarthy and colorless; a flash of teeth showed whitely when he smiled. His lips were thin and curved cruelly, and his hands, seen at long range, were slender but not effeminate, suggesting pliability and strength. I beckoned my waiter, and, studying the menu, questioned him in an undertone.

"The man just sitting down—do you know who he is?"

The waiter arranged my water-glass and looked up. "The dark gentleman opposite? Mr. Romero, the famous architect, sir. He comes here often."

"He did that Bal Masque poster, if I'm not mistaken," I went on quizzically.

"Yes? And it's no wonder. Mr. Romero is managing the affair, sir, and a very worthy cause it is, too—a home for incurables, sir. Perhaps you've heard of it—Doctor Stuart's Home for Incurables. The old place burned up in the fire."

"Ah! *Doctor Stuart's Home for Incurables!*" I echoed. Then recovering myself, I asked easily, "Romero is a society butterfly, too?"

"If one can trust the papers, sir."

I gave my order, and pondered, drawing patterns on the damask cloth with my fork. I did not doubt for a moment that the book in my possession belonged to Luis Romero; its size, description, and the peculiar use to which it had been put was reasonable proof. But the knowledge that the book belonged to this gentleman did not move me nearly as much as the fact that he must be on somewhat intimate terms with Doctor Stuart, the man who had called three times upon Hanbury. One could argue many things from this slight combination of circumstances, and on the other hand, the explanation might be the simplest thing imaginable. At any rate, I was establishing clues, and the excitement of the chase began

to stir my pulses. Even a futile hint has zest until the final disappointing hour.

I was leaning forward to better glimpse Luis Romero, when the steward came up and laid a card before me, with the following scrawl written on it:

Mr. Winfield, won't you come over and say "Hello"?

For a moment I stared blankly at this message, and the steward, mistaking my amazement, said affably:

"To your left, sir, a lady, with red roses on her hat."

My gaze followed his directing nod, and I saw whom he meant. It was an actress named Lilian Ashburton, who had traveled down from Puget Sound on the same steamer with me.

I recovered myself, and, turning the card over, scribbled quickly:

Must be some mistake.

Arthur Hanbury.

I did not watch the effect of my message, but to my surprise the card was returned with the following sentence under my words:

"Nevertheless, I expect you to join me."

The steward smiled. "Any answer?" he asked.

I tore up the card and dropped it into my ash tray.

"None," I said decisively.

The lady was not to be ignored so easily, and presently I was conscious that she had left her seat and was moving in my direction. I marshalled my gallantry, and, rising, waited with one hand upon a chair.

She halted before my table, looked up and began banteringly, "Mr.—er—er—"

"Arthur—"

"Fiddlesticks!" she flashed.

"No—pardon, Hanbury," I finished, solemnly.

She swept into a seat; I followed her example. The waiter, bowing and attentive, was ready for the order.

"Shall we have a preliminary?" I inquired, toying with a menu.

"Yes—if that means something long and liquid," she nodded back gaily.

I turned to the waiter. "Make it two—two long liquids," I ordered.

Having dispensed with this formality, we leaned back and looked at one another. She had the artificiality of her profession, and her hair flamed as unnaturally as her cheeks, but her exaggerated personality was toned in the soft evening lights.

"I'm afraid," she said finally, "that I've given you a bad ten minutes."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, but I simply couldn't resist the temptation. I said to myself—that man's dreaming, and somebody ought to set an alarm clock and wake him up."

I smiled grimly. "And so you proceeded to wind the alarm?"

"Precisely, only I wasn't quite sure of you at first."

"Then I judge you're sure of me now?"

She gurgled triumphantly. "Oh, quite. You really did that card-tearing scene beautifully. I know a good piece of acting when I see it."

It was useless for me to pretend further. "But how could you possibly have recognized me?"

"Well—you see, I'm more or less accustomed to make-up," she volunteered.

The waiter returned with the long liquids, and I gave a further order.

"You know, I never can resist anything dramatic," she went on, and I began to wonder what sort of a commotion would result if I rose suddenly and said in a loud voice, "Ladies and Gentlemen, that man is *not* Arthur Hanbury—he is Winfield, George Winfield, and there's crooked work somewhere!"

I lifted my glass to hers. "You should check such disagreeable tendencies," I retorted blandly.

"But didn't I?" she retorted. "Why, you outclassed me at every point. When you tore up that card and went on puffing your cigar, I said, 'Lilian Ashburton, you can't hope to divide stage honors with any such polished villain as that. He's good for a five-act

drama, and you want to waste him on a mere curtain-raiser."

I flushed and she laughed, tilting her nose saucily in midair. I hardly knew whether to be aggravated or amused, so I suggested easily:

"Suppose we enjoy the supper first, and become serious afterward?"

She nodded gaily, and we became delightfully frivolous. The café filled rapidly until every table was pressed into service. The cheer was contagious. I forgot my play-acting, my purpose, and even the questionable friendship of my guest. With the liqueurs came a reminder of less pleasant situations. I had just finished chilling my cordial when the figure of Luis Romero issued from the telephone booth. The sense of his presence quickened me to the business in hand. My companion had just dipped her fingers into a finger-bowl when I leaned forward and said:

"We have finished supper, Miss Ashburton."

She straightened up, checking a smile. "Then we are to begin fighting?"

"Since you put it so—yes."

"Oh, but I don't put it so. I'm for peace. That's what I'm here for—ready with the treaty—all *you* have to do is sign it."

I narrowed my eyes. "That means there are conditions."

"Certainly."

"In your favor?"

"Don't I hold the winning hand?"

I pushed my napkin from me. "But do you?"

"Well, throw down a card and we'll prove it."

I frowned slightly. "Come! Is it a question of money?"

She shrugged prettily. "I shall expect you to do your best."

"This is blackmail," I said, bitterly.

"Nothing so ambitious as that, Mr. Winfield. I merely expect to be retained by the defense."

She had leaned forward, her hat tilted coquettishly, her grey-green eyes flashing and almost merry, a line of freckles on her nose, which defied the

powder puff, hinting at her genuineness.

I needed a friend and I was prepared to risk something to secure one. Besides, I must take a risk whether she were to be friend or enemy.

"You mentioned being retained by the defense," I began. "Was that merely a play on words, or are you ready to stand by their meaning?"

"Stand by their meaning?" she echoed.

"Yes—when the defense gathers recruits, it expects a fight!" I flashed.

Her eyes brightened. "Trust me," she returned.

Now was my chance to test Romero. I rose, her glance following me curiously as I crossed the room and touched him on the shoulder. He turned nervously, and half rose in his seat.

"Mr. Luis Romero?" I inquired.

He bowed.

"Did you by any chance drop a book in the vicinity of the water-front—a small book with sketches in it?"

In the brief silence following I realized that he was debating an answer.

"No," he said finally.

"Ah, I have been misinformed!" I returned. "Pardon the intrusion."

He murmured a polite retort, his eyes narrowed. My glance answered his scrutiny. I turned abruptly and left him.

Lilian Ashburton was gathering up her trifles in preparation for departure.

"Well?" I challenged.

"Well?" she flung back.

"What do you think of him?"

"I think that he was lying."

"Then you overheard the conversation?"

"That was impossible."

"Then how do you know what it was about?"

"I don't. I only know that he was lying."

"Do you think he'll bear watching?"

"I think that of *everybody*," she said gaily, as she began to draw on her gloves.

I turned instinctively toward Romero's table. Romero had risen and was bowing a late arrival into a seat oppo-

site him. I swept the newcomer with a keen glance. There was an air unmistakably professional about the squat, heavy figure. I looked up at my waiter. He came bowing obsequiously.

"Tell me, who is the man sitting at Romero's table?"

He raised his eyes, politely incredulous at my ignorance.

"Oh, that is Doctor Stuart. Everybody knows *him*!"

"Yes, of course, everybody ought to. He's one of the big guns," I retorted drily.

CHAPTER IV

NEXT morning I arose from the breakfast-table with two resolves—to quit the hotel and Hanbury's uncertain personality, and to see Lilian Ashburton and cautiously extricate myself from her clutches. Not that I intended to give up the chase; I was still keen for pursuit, but the bright sunshine of morning dissipated what romantic clouds had hitherto enchanted my outlook. The lingering sweetness in my first taste of adventure began to cloy. What if Carmelita did not exist? What if the letter were merely a cheap trick, one such as the papers write up every day?

A mystery was still there; a mystery, but not *the* mystery? Who was Carmelita? Who was the delightfully cruel ogre who kept her languishing in a dungeon? Where was the enchanted castle, and the postern door ready to open at my demand? This was what imagination offered; reality gave me Hanbury, drugged and robbed upon the highway.

Last night Lilian Ashburton had dismissed me with the air of an indulgent queen, and the command to visit her next morning at the Sunnyside Apartments was not one whit less majestic. Apparently she had all the feminine love of authority, and she took no pains to conceal the satisfaction that my surrender gave. It was noon before I sauntered forth to keep my appointment with her, and I was not disap-

pointed in the general picture of her habitation which my mind had framed.

The Sunnyside Apartments had the appearance of being squeezed unwillingly into a very small lot, bulging out into fantastic bay windows and plaster decorations, in an endeavor to gain space and pretension. Whoever was snared by this thin veneer of gentility became speedily disillusioned at the entrance hall; one might have overlooked its chenille-draped cosy corner, or the scroll-saw hat rack, or even the hand-painted umbrella stand, but mingled odors of light-housekeeping and escaping gas were not so easily ignored. It was an atmosphere of fried steak, yellow-backed novels and red wrappers, and all this without venturing more than a step over its threshold, but I found that Lilian Ashburton had not succumbed to her environment.

She answered the door-bell promptly, and ushered me into a tiny room. For its size it held more furniture than any room I had ever seen. A folding-bed, a bureau, a table, three chairs, a wash-basin, a small gas stove, and in addition a mantelpiece and space for two doors and as many windows. All bric-a-brac, however, had been discreetly suppressed, and a lowered window-shade did much to subdue a crude background.

"Well, what do you think of my apartments?" she asked banteringly, as she waved me to a seat and began immediate preparations for tea.

I glanced about, watching the quick, deft way with which she arranged the tea-cup preliminaries, and said casually:

"You get on extremely well, considering the elbow-room."

She lit the gas stove, and threw a match aside. "Oh, I've always been cramped—like a canned sardine. Do you know, ever since I can remember I've wriggled between furniture and kitchen utensils. And in the old days, they didn't have cheek enough to call them apartments. They were 'house-keeping rooms,' and you boiled, fried and stewed over one sickly kerosene

flame, and everything tasted of coal-oil and smudge."

She looked up, laughed, and, finding me interested, went on:

"Mother told fortunes for a living—not trance business—just with cards. You know the sort—fifty cents a sitting. Mother was clever, too, in a cheap, Cockney way, and I caught enough of her wit to keep from starving. It's no snap keeping the wolf from the door, and he's scratched pretty lively at mine. This last footlight experience kept the old brute busier than usual, and I'm about ready to call it off. You see, I haven't always trodden the boards." She leaned forward on the table and whispered impressively, "*Once, a very long time ago, I was a detective.*"

I refused to be surprised by her confession, and she filled the teakettle and swung it over the flame.

"I didn't mean to tell the story of my life, but I thought perhaps you might want a line on the person you were—*retaining for the defense*," she finished drily.

I leaned back in my chair and cleared my throat. "I'm sorry you were not spared all this self-revelation," I retorted, "because I've decided to let the case drop."

She dashed a pinch of tea into a pot. "You mean that you've decided to let *me* drop."

I lifted my hands protestingly. "A purely financial matter."

"But I'm perfectly willing to share in the prospects," she argued.

"Prospects! Good Lord! There are none."

"Oh, come now, Mr. Winfield. I've just informed you that Mother told fortunes and that I'd been a detective for money and an actress largely for fun. Don't you suppose I've had training enough to know that men don't step into other people's shoes for nothing?"

The kettle was steaming and she stopped to pour its contents into the teapot. Her dress was gray and clinging, and, perhaps at close range, soiled, but she made a pretty picture with her

flaming hair lighting up her colorless gown.

"How did you first come to think that I was playing a game?" I asked helplessly.

She laid aside the kettle, laughing at the memory. "Really, it was too funny! At Techau's, the night you came in for supper. I was skimming through the paper and almost the first headline that caught my eye was the hotel arrivals. I had just lit on Arthur Hanbury's name at the Hampton when I saw you. I sent over a note and you returned Hanbury's card. I just *felt* something was wrong. I made up my mind to follow it up. I didn't make any mistakes!"

I crossed over to her place at the table, holding my cup while she poured tea. "Only *one* mistake," I corrected, smiling down upon her.

She dropped a lump of sugar into my spoon. "A serious one?"

"Well, that depends on the point of view. There aren't any financial prospects, as I said before."

"You're either a romancer or a fool."

"I wonder if there's any choice?"

She pursed her lips. "Well, a romancer has imagination and usually a fool is sentimental."

"Which do you prefer?"

"What a question to ask a woman!" she replied, moving away.

I stirred my tea thoughtfully and she again faced me. "I said, you know, that I'd be willing to share the prospects. That means *anything* the game offers."

"But—" I began weakly.

"No *but* about it. Finish that cup of tea and tell me everything."

I dropped into a seat and succumbed. She had that delightfully domineering way that, in a woman, men pretend to dislike but secretly admire. She seated herself opposite, listening attentively to my story.

"It's splendid!" she cried, as I finished, "but you're a fool nevertheless."

"You only confirm my own convictions," I murmured.

She poured some more tea and said derisively:

"I'm convinced of one thing: Mr. Arthur Hanbury will be lucky if he comes through the mill alive, and you will be more than lucky if you're not credited with his murder."

"But when I tell my story—"

"Nobody will believe it."

"And yet," I said heatedly, "you began by calling it splendid."

She captured a stray lock and twisted it into a fascinating curl. "I didn't mean the story—I meant you. You're the sort of unsophisticated hero they put into children's picture-books."

"I suppose that's meant for a compliment?"

"It is a compliment. One has to stand on two legs and step pretty lively to take a child's fancy." She put her hand on my shoulder, thrusting me at arm's length, for all the world as if I were a wayward child needing a dash of encouragement to temper a reproof. "You don't know how glad I am that you came along just when you did. I got so tired of people who were afraid to take a risk. Just when everything was growing dull and stupid, why you step in and trick me into thinking there are a few people with real flesh and blood. And *we're* going to live even if it does cost us a few short breaths."

"And the prospects?" I cautioned. "Have you really reasoned out your share of them?"

She let her hand drop from my shoulder, and I thought I saw a clenched fist at her side.

"Can't you see I'm tired of this?" she retorted, sweeping her arm about the room. "I'm in a rut and anything that pulls me out is prospect enough."

I counted the possibilities on my fingers. "Carmelita a fraud, Dr. Stuart questionable, Romero open to suspicion, Hanbury probably dead, and I—a prospective criminal. After all, rescuing an enchanted lady ought to pull anybody out of the doldrums," I reasoned grimly.

She recaptured herself with a cheery laugh. "Rescuing an enchanted lady?"

she drawled. "She's the least of my troubles."

"Why, I thought you were extremely interested?" I exclaimed.

"In *her*? Why should I be?"

"Then you're not going to help?"

"Of course I am."

"But I really don't see—"

"I didn't expect you would. That's one of the things that makes you such a delightful—"

"Fool," I almost snapped.

"It was a question of being either imaginative or sentimental, if you remember," she returned.

"And what was your preference?"

She folded her arms and smiled inscrutably. "Just the same as any other woman's," she answered.

CHAPTER V

I LEFT the Sunnyside Apartments at two o'clock, richer by two things—Lilian Ashburton's advice, and a formidable-looking pistol. Lilian Ashburton's enthusiasm had buoyed me. Her comradeship was a thing to be desired. I no longer feared her. I knew that she would ring true. But I was determined not to return to the Hotel Hampton again. I had learned enough from that quarter, and further sojourning there would prove dangerous. My next move, naturally, was in the direction of Carmelita's prison. In a little over an hour I stood before the Turnpike House, mentioned in Carmelita's letter. Just off a dusty country road, hedged by windswept cypresses, and preceded by the inevitable watering trough, it stood, an invitation to thirsty men and beasts, a two-story affair suggesting something more than a mere saloon, with stables and wagon-sheds in the rear, further proof that prolonged cheer might be had for a consideration.

Walking a block to the west, I turned into the road referred to in Carmelita's letter. A strong wind was blowing and a high fog obscured the sun. It was a day for a brisk pace, but I walked leisurely, taking time to acquaint myself with the locality.

The only vivid note was blue sea to the west. Faint traces of green, called into life by recent rain, fringed the road, and here and there a red house-top showed through wind-blown cypress and acacia, but otherwise the sand-dunes were gray and neutral. Altogether, the prospect was melancholy, although on a bright day I was sure that it might be cheerful and even gay. A mile of road ended, as the letter had stated, in a mere trail.

A highway reveals itself too boldly to touch one's fancy, but a foot-path straggles with such a wayward charm that, as I left the road, I found every curve in the trail screening a possible adventure.

Visions of masked men and troops of banditti, fearless horsemen and the play of firearms, colored my expectations, but I got nothing better than the somberness of a late autumn day, and the soft call of quail in the underbush.

At last, when the afternoon was well on to three o'clock, I gained the top of a considerable hill, and found a hollow, thickly planted with eucalyptus, laying to the eastward.

I must confess that my heart gave a sudden bound as I realized how near I now stood to the scene of action.

The grove of trees was as dense and mysterious as Carmelita had described, giving no hint of habitation. I picked my way through the bare, damp floor of the forest, and, without warning, came upon a clearing in which the house stood. It was a low, rambling structure, smothered in vines, and with a livable, inviting air that quite surprised me. I had expected something gaunt and grim, set in a mouldy valley, surrounded by black, whispering trees; or, at least, a desolate sea-shore cottage, windswept and black.

The house was old and lacked character, but its grounds, extensive and well-planned, had been of some pretensions. In the center of a drive, the crumbling ruins of a fountain reared itself with broken dignity. Rose bushes, unclipped and wild, rioted into cypress hedges beyond, and geraniums,

still flushing with life, spilled their crimson petals along the weed-grown walks. Hills to the west sheltered the garden from summer winds, and shut out everything of the sea except its muffled roar.

The transition from forest to garden had come so suddenly that it was some moments before I realized how indiscreet was my survey of the grounds. This realization was further heightened by the snapping of broken twigs and a crunching sound of footsteps along the floor of the eucalyptus grove. I turned quickly to hide myself in the cypress hedge.

After several moments, I peered out from my screen of boughs, thinking to place myself more advantageously. The carriage road, circling rose-beds and fountain, led out through an open gateway and lost itself in a grove of trees to the south.

I was at the extreme end of the garden, and I decided to work up toward the house, so that I might be nearer Carmelita when she came out for her ride. I stepped from my hiding-place and slipped along, close to the hedge, until I came to a desirable spot. Clutching Lilian Ashburton's pistol, I waited, tense and anxious.

At last the low rumble of wheels echoed through the garden. Peering out, I saw an open carriage swing up the driveway and halt at the front door. Presently the door of the house flew open and two women came down the steps. One entered the carriage immediately, but the other, tall and heavily veiled, halted, and turning swiftly, began to tour the garden, plucking and scenting the roses as if in search of a particular flower.

The second woman called sharply in Spanish from the carriage. The coachman swung from his seat and stood, attentively watching the veiled figure, but no further protest disturbed the pantomime.

This, then, was Carmelita! I pressed myself flatly against the hedge, waiting patiently for her approach. She came finally, still keeping up her play, petu-

lantly scattering rose petals. Should I signal, or would she search the hedge carefully?

Fortunately, a rose bush, flinging itself into the cypress, lured her almost to the very spot that harbored me, and, as her hand strayed near it, I leaned as far forward as I dared and hoarsely whispered:

"Carmelita!"

Even now, I marvel at the wonderful calm with which she received the knowledge of my presence.

She did not even turn her head, but the rose stem in her hand snapped quickly, followed by a sharp intake of breath.

Then, still toying with the blossom, she swayed toward me, and said, lowly but distinctly:

"Someone has betrayed us!"

The next instant she had moved away, still in search of the flower which the garden would not yield, and, finally, as if in despair, she threw away the blossoms she had plucked and entered the carriage.

The coachman climbed nimbly to his seat, the whip cracked and Carmelita was whirled away.

The princess of my dreams could scarcely have been more shadowy and melancholy, and if no castle frowned romantically upon my adventure, at least a tangled garden rioted, and there were black woods beyond, and, to the west, the sea's voice, so that it was no wonder my blood tingled as I heard the hoof beats of the horses die away.

CHAPTER VI

THE suddenness of Carmelita's appearance and the equal suddenness of her departure, left me confused. Then her enigmatical greeting was disconcerting. Should I wait until she returned, or had further adventure ended for today? But while I leaned back against the gnarled cypress trunks pondering my next step, a brief early twilight settled down. The dead fountain, the untamed vines, the house smothered by mysterious foliage, the stillness, broken

only by a steady roar from the sea, all these evidences of solitude made me uneasy. Yet, now that I had come upon the scene of action, I decided to wait patiently, hoping for the carriage's return, while darkness and disappointment closed in upon me.

Secure in the dusk, I left my hiding place, pushed through the garden, and stood before the house. It rose gloomily, without the faintest gleam of light from window or crevice. The front entrance was closed securely by weather-beaten double doors, and no smoke issued from the chimneys. The house was deserted! For a moment I was confused; then, the truth dawned. They had found another hiding-place for Carmelita! The ride that afternoon had not been for the usual daily airing; it was for flight!

I turned from the house full of vague regret. A virginal moon was silvering the garden, and every rose that swept my hand dropped heavily with dew. Reaction and disappointment left a physical weariness, and I stumbled along the brier-flanked path to the fountain. Seating myself on its ruin, I looked back at the house; suddenly a light flashed from a row of windows and died as quickly.

I was done with stealth, and uncertainty, and pretense, and ready to approach my next problem swiftly and directly. The house rose as black and unpromising as before, but drawing my pistol, I stamped defiantly up the front steps and beat upon the massive door with a clenched fist. The silence was unbroken and I vigorously repeated my demand. A faint gleam of light from an upper window answered me, and I caught the sound of a window opened cautiously.

This evidence of life roused me to sudden fury, and I rattled and kicked and pounded at the entrance until the door was flung back, revealing a grim, uncertain figure, looming as a dark background to a mellow patch of candle-light. I gripped my weapon and brought it into the light. At this moment the candle's rays fell squarely up-

on my face and the man opposite me, unmistakably a Spaniard, fell back with an exclamation that died away into a warning hiss.

A hesitancy on my part gave him an advantage which he quickly seized; he darted forward and sent my pistol flying. I felt the impact of his body, staggered, wheeled suddenly and hurled him headlong down the steps, but the effort cost me my balance and I stumbled wildly after him.

As I jumped to my feet, the gleam of a knife and the soft, almost tuneful, oaths that his set teeth breathed betrayed his purpose. In the faint moonlight we stood facing one another, our shoulders thrown forward into pouncing attitude, our hands clenched.

He sprang at me again. I braced myself, seizing his upraised wrist as his knife swung above my head. Pressing myself flatly against his body, I threw an arm across his shoulder, striving desperately to knock the weapon from his hand. He took a deep breath, I felt the muscles of his back strain, and, as he pulled away, I tripped him suddenly, and we fell together.

A cry of rage broke from him, and he shook free my grip on his wrist. A cold knife-blade swept my cheek. I fumbled wildly for his hand, but found his throat more easily. It was man to man now, there could be no compromise nor quarter. My fingers were brutally throttling his curses; his breath came sobbingly, his chest collapsed under my weight.

But success brought its touch of recklessness, and I forgot the hand that still clasped spasmodically at a knife handle. I felt a stinging pain in my thigh, and an involuntary start put me at a disadvantage. The next instant my adversary had wriggled into safety, and I was rolling in the dust of the road.

I leaped to my feet, and fell upon him with sudden fury. A crushing blow wilted his arm and I heard his weapon fall. Then, still tempted by the fullness of his throat, my two hands closed about it. He sank on his knees. My grip tightened. But we were both

too fresh and lusty to conquer easily with mere physical force, and again he shook me free.

Passion blinded us, but physical contact sharpened our other senses and we had no need for sight. Struggling and beating our way through the garden, we covered the length of the carriage road, and still neither claimed an advantage. Finally, still writhing and tumbling, we stumbled back toward the house again. My head was growing giddy, the pain in my thigh increased with every movement, my breath came fitfully. To prolong the struggle at such close range was suicide. I halted, dropped to confuse him, and wrenched myself from his grasp.

This sudden movement had flung my adversary a safe distance from me, but I stood waiting for a renewal of his onslaught. Instead, a moment of silence followed, intense and startling, broken only by the boom of the surf. I took a cautious step nearer; my man was listening. Faintly a soft patterning sound reached me—the faraway echo of hoof beats and the easy rumble of a carriage. The dark villain stirred uneasily, fell back, and with a swift bound gained the stairs, ran lightly up, and disappeared into the house.

To this day I cannot recall many details of what followed. One thing is certain, my antagonist, in his haste, forgot to close the door, and, stumbling up the steps in pursuit of him, I chanced upon my pistol. Entering the house, I went upstairs, and the memory of a heavy, sweet odor of lavender and dead rose leaves within doors is as keen as when its belated fragrance first greeted me.

Guided by a thin streak of light, I came upon the room into which he had disappeared. I threw myself against the barrier, heard the lock snap, and felt the door give way.

A flood of light almost blinded me, but the picture which met my eye shaped itself quickly. A bandaged figure lay upon an iron bed in one corner of the room, and the Spaniard was standing guard, a chair in his hands up-

raised to fell me with one swift blow, He made an ugly silhouette against the light, his arms bared, his black hair tumbling about his face, his supple frame flung into tense brutality. I drew in a quick breath, whipped my pistol into position, and fired. He went down limply, indistinct in the smoke, the chair pitching wildly from his grasp.

When the smoke had cleared, I entered the room. The Spaniard was dead, there was no doubt of that; the other man was moaning pitifully, and at my touch he flopped about the bed for a moment like a decapitated fowl.

As I recoiled from the man's impotent flutterings, my thoughts, drifting and blurring in the quick succession of events, were suddenly sharpened and alert. The sound of hoof beats became perfectly distinct and unmistakable. The snap of a whip and a rumbling of wheels drew me to the window. Through the pale moonlight I saw a swaying bulk roll past the fountain. My heart fluttered with mingled expectation and fear. Were they bringing Carmelita back?

CHAPTER VII

I HEARD the carriage stop, and I crept downstairs. My first care was to blow out the light, not daring to plan a further move. The front door was still open. I halted at a turn in the staircase, warned by a heavy tramping up the front steps, and gripped my pistol as I flattened myself against the wall. Through the open doorway the figure of a man, heavily coated, stood out against the soft flood of moonlight. He stopped, whistled softly, and was lost in shadows of the lower hall.

I started down again, but halted. He was retracing his steps. Presently I heard him mounting the stairs. The stillness was so intense that the noise of my breathing seemed to fill a great space. I felt a tenseness of the throat, and, as he swept past me, I coughed. I heard him turn sharply, felt his coat brush past my hand, and instantly a match flared, lighting up his features.

Close enough to throttle me if he were so disposed, his hand poised gracefully to accommodate the lighted match, stood Mr. Luis Romero. Instantly, the connection between his appearance on the scene and the battered stranger upstairs swept over me. The injured man was Hanbury! And his injuries were the result of the accident I had witnessed only the night before.

My presence surprised Romero, but only a momentary inactivity betrayed this. I, on the other hand, had faced the unexpected too frequently that night to be caught unawares. I knew that I must act quickly. The light began to fail, and the indecision in his face was dying as rapidly. I slipped my fingers from the trigger of my pistol, caught at the barrel, and let him have the butt end full in the temple. The banister creaked as he dropped against it. I caught him as he fell, but he slipped from my grasp and rolled heavily down the stairs as I made my way out.

The carriage was before the door, and seemed empty. I crept cautiously toward it, pressing my face against a window. A figure drew back. I flung the door open upon the shrinking form of a woman. She gave a cry, half whisper and half scream, as I thrust my head inside, and a nervous laugh melted into an exclamation.

"Winfield!"

"Miss Ashburton!"

"Has he gone?" she whispered.

"For the time," I answered. "What are you after?"

"You, she returned.

I felt her hand upon my arm and I distrustfully shook it away. "Does this mean that I have been betrayed?" I demanded.

"If you choose to think so," she said coldly.

"Choose to think," I breathed. "My God, do you fancy I'm in a rational frame of mind to-night?"

My tone roused her. "What's gone wrong?" she cried, grasping the lapels of my coat, and shaking me violently.

Her hand came in contact with a damp patch of cloth. "Blood!" she

gasped, shrinking back. "Has anyone been killed?"

I laughed stridently. "I killed one."

She glided out of the carriage. "Winfield!" she cried sharply. "Pull yourself together. What's happened to Romero?"

"Only stunned!" I answered.

"Then for God's sake," she commanded, "get on the box and drive out of this."

"Where's the driver?"

"The driver was Romero!"

Events were moving with such swift complication that I could only stare at Lilian Ashburton and mutter weakly, "I can't go away and leave Hanbury."

"Hanbury?"

"Yes—upstairs with a cracked skull.

"Bring him here."

She spoke quietly, with the air of one accustomed to order and to be obeyed, but I hesitated, still puzzled by her presence and scarcely knowing which move was expedient.

"But how did you come on the scene?" I demanded.

"Does that matter, with a wounded man to care for? Winfield, give me credit for *some* resource."

Her decisive scorn roused me. Without comment, I turned on my heel and came back with Hanbury, wrapped in blankets, moaning pitifully, in my arms. Lilian Ashburton seated herself in the carriage, and I rested his poor head against her shoulders.

I moved closer to her. "Are you really game? Do you think you can stand the strain—into town?" I asked, pointing to Hanbury's inanimate form.

"Yes," she said simply.

"You're one in a thousand, Lilian," I whispered.

"Winfield," she returned softly, "never take time to mistrust a woman when you need her help—and now, drive like—"

"Hell!" I finished under my breath, slamming the door and leaping upon the box.

I can look back now upon the exhilarating frenzy of that ride with some

degree of wonder. Surely my senses must have responded to a strange buoyancy, touched by madness, as I rode rough-shod over every obstacle.

I can see the thin white road winding like a pale snake through the forest, and a passionless moon chilling even the stars, while breakers pound ominously from the shore, and rustling trees whisper the night's secrets.

But perhaps memory wakes more keenly to the sense of smell. Thus, a garden fragrance brings Carmelita nearer; but the odor of willows carries a chill. Again, faded rose-leaves and lavender flash weapons into life, and I feel the old carriage lumber and plunge at a sniff of the sea's tang. Strange and incongruous these associations, but I can answer for their vividness and power.

Now the road curved from its tree shadows, running thread-like and indistinct through lupine-dotted sand dunes, and my mind cleared quickly. The ocean stretched out before me, very calm for all its restless murmuring, and I stopped the carriage, only to hear the dull, even moaning of pain. I swung down from my seat, and together Lilian Ashburton and I shifted the position of our charge, and, without comment, I was at my post again and the carriage skimming through the night, like a phantom hulk, ploughing a sea of sand instead of foam.

Where the road led I did not know, but of one thing at least I was sure—Death was still bent on taking his full toll of the night's wage, and only the crack of my whip kept him at bay.

We were upon some shallow pools now, and there was a hint of willows in the air that made me send the horses galloping by, as if to get free and into the open spaces again, where even the startled dart of a rabbit went unscreened in such a night.

Finally, the swaying of my seat lulled me into a half slumber, which jumbled landscape and thoughts and physical sensation. A wraith of fog slipped stealthily landward, and all at once we were enveloped, the moon was snuffed,

and still the horses answered the mechanical snapping of my whip. My thoughts wandered fancifully, and romance came dancing in again, keeping time to the galloping hoof-beats.

Suddenly a light rose ahead. I snapped my whip in bravado, the horses plunged and strained, but to no purpose. A heavy hand checked their progress, and fancy fled, leaving only a cold, wet fog, and the knowledge that in reality I was before the Turnpike House.

"Put down the light," I called sharply. "It hurts my eyes."

I was obeyed, a clink of bottles followed, and a draught of liquor was lifted up to me.

I tossed it down, and, leaning over, whispered:

"A small one, please, for the lady—inside—" I heard a villainous chuckle, "and remember—no light on the scene."

Again glass and bottle tinkled, and I heard the door of the carriage open. I caught only a low murmur from within, but another clink told me that a drink was being poured for Hanbury. I found a dollar in my pocket and dropped it over into the man's uplifted hand.

He blinked and muttered surlily, "That's little enough for shivering an hour in the fog, and keeping my mouth shut to boot. You said *eleven o'clock*."

"Well, am I so late?"

"Didn't I say I'd waited an hour," he shot back.

I dropped my voice. "Did you ever get more for three drinks and your insults?"

He spat upon the ground, growling in an undertone, and I clucked to the horses. Instantly he flung himself at their heads, checking them roughly.

"Not by a damn sight," I heard him yell. "When there's dirty work afoot I want my price."

I half rose in my seat, and poised my whip for a stinging stroke, cutting the horses' backs with a full sweep.

There was a mad plunge, a rattle of gravel flung up by furious hoof beats,

and the Turnpike's host was thrown sprawling to one side.

It was at a black hour of early morning when I stopped the carriage and swung down to open the carriage door.

Hanbury's groan was the first note that greeted me.

"Has he been this bad all the way?" I asked.

"Yes—where are we?"

"Howard and Third Streets; my old lodgings are around the corner."

I heard her draw in a faint, sighing breath. "You must be quick," she said. "I am beginning to give out. My shoulder—you know he is not a lightweight.

"Can you wait until I try the door? It will save trouble."

"Yes," she answered simply.

I limped as quickly as my wounded thigh would permit, turned into my former lodgings unmolested and tried the door to the old room. It was locked. But I knew the lock to be cheap and flimsy, and, pressing my weight gradually but firmly against it, I felt it snap. Then I went back.

"What's the number of the house," Lilian Ashburton asked, "I want to be on hand to-morrow."

"I can't think of it now," I said stupidly. "I'll tell you when I come back."

"Come back?" she echoed.

"Yes—to drive you home."

"And leave him alone? Nonsense! You must not think of it."

"But you—you forgot it is past midnight."

She smothered a faint laugh. "It has been for some time."

"And you're not afraid?"

"I *mustn't* be," was her firm answer.

I gathered Hanbury in my arms and staggered under his dead weight; in the shadow of the doorway I heard the patter of her footsteps behind me.

"No further," I entreated, "the number of the room is nine. Good-night and—"

My thanks trembled and died. I felt a reassuring pressure of her hand against my shoulder, and she was gone.

Inside a half tipsy lodger leered at me as I passed him with my burden.

"What's wrong?" he demanded thickly.

"Drunk!" I muttered, and stumbled on.

My head was cracking with pain, my knees were quivering, and my heart fluttered as if to free itself. I felt my way into the black room, found the bed, and let Hanbury drop heavily upon it.

I had a moment of brief, physical collapse, but my mind, whirling like a wheel set in motion, refused to answer nature's warning.

I eased Hanbury as best I could, and threw myself into a chair, determined, since I could not sleep, at least to think as rationally as possible. Of all bewildering nights, this had been the worst. Adventure had tempted me with a smiling face; now she scowled. Matters were serious. Blood had flowed, and I was stained by it. Carmelita too was lost; I had broken open the cocoon, to find only an empty shell. Thus the darkness wore on, punctuated by harassed thoughts, and Hanbury's feeble groans.

The morning light found my brain still whirling. I heard the tramp of early risers in the hall, the rattle of wagons began to disturb the quiet, hoarse whistles woke the water-front. When the sun filtered through the crevices of drawn blinds, I knew that the morning had come at last, and with it responsibilities and dangers.

I rose to moisten Hanbury's lips. A knock upon the door startled me. It began again, soft, apologetic, almost cautious. What face would adventure show to-day if I threw back the door?

CHAPTER VIII

I OPENED the door cautiously; the hall's blackness defied a tremulous gas-light. I got a wavering glimpse of a man, overcoated, blunt, massive. In a flash I knew that Doctor Stuart was before me.

He pressed up and withdrew apolo-

getically. "I fancy I have the wrong room," he murmured. "Let me see—this is room Number Nine? You certainly look too healthy to need my services. The directions must have got mixed over the phone."

"Not at all," I returned calmly, motioning him into the room. "There is plenty to be done here—if you will be so good."

He was a man of medium height, so massively built that his figure carried a suggestion of squattiness. His hair was thick, straight and mouse-colored, his nose blunt enough to betray stubbornness, his forehead ample and well proportioned. Seen in profile, his face was rather commonplace though forceful, but when he turned and faced me, I had quite another impression. All the evenness of his features was overcome by the flashing restlessness of his eyes. They were keen and penetrating, warm and insolent, cool and expressionless, in turn, and for a moment I stood staring silently at him, attracted by their vitality. His glance, if quick, was comprehensive. I was sure that no detail of my personality escaped him.

I raised the curtains as he entered; then I pointed to Hanbury. Instantly the challenge in his eyes melted into critical precision, but as he bent over the patient, a sudden recoil told me that he had seen Hanbury before.

When he had finished the examination, he looked up at me and said: "I think this job does not belong exclusively to the medical profession."

"No?" I echoed.

"It looks like a very good case to turn over to the authorities."

"My word to the contrary?"

He tapped upon the bedstead. "I scarcely know you well enough to give your word any great weight," he answered, bluntly.

A gentle rap upon the door routed my reply. It was Lilian Ashburton. She hardly waited for permission to enter, but advanced with an air which told me that she had the situation well in hand. Ignoring me, she turned to Doctor Stuart:

"I presume you are Doctor Stuart," she began. "So you received my 'phone message? I was so upset and then I feared—"

He checked her impatiently. "You needn't have distorted the truth to gain my services," he said.

Her look was provokingly candid as she drew off a glove. "I don't quite understand, Doctor."

"You left word that one of my friends was dangerously injured. This man is no friend of mine."

"I have heard him speak of you," she returned, biting her lips.

"I don't even know his name," he said, emphatically.

She flashed a look of inquiry at me.

"Winfield—his name is George Winfield." I lied quickly, taking my cue.

Doctor Stuart turned suddenly on me. "And your name—I have not yet been introduced."

I braced myself stolidly. "Hanbury," I said clearly, "Mr. Arthur Hanbury."

A flush betrayed his surprise. His lips came together with a savage snap, but he quickly recovered himself as he said evenly:

"And what do you propose to do, Mr. Hanbury?"

"Perhaps Doctor Stuart has a suggestion," interrupted Lilian Ashburton adroitly.

"I have already given it, Madam. This is a matter for the police."

"Then you cannot be persuaded to the contrary?" I urged, regaining my poise.

Lilian smiled sweetly. "Persuaded? Why should Doctor Stuart be persuaded? I'm willing to defer to his judgment, and if he feels that it is necessary, why—" She finished with a shrug.

"But it isn't necessary," I insisted, missing her point.

"We don't feel it to be," she went on, "but then there is another point of view. And I'm willing, why should you object? After all, I'll be the only sufferer."

I began to see that she was forcing Stuart's hand. "The lady decides," I

said, bowing to them both. "Turn the matter over to the authorities, by all means. Meanwhile what relief can we offer Mr. Winfield? What are his chances?"

Doctor Stuart lost some of his aggressiveness. "His chances are slight, but with good care perhaps—"

"He shall have that," Lilian said decidedly.

"Then let us begin," suggested Stuart.

Standing apart, I watched Stuart and Lilian Ashburton minister to Hanbury's needs. It was surprising how deftly and unobtrusively she anticipated the Doctor's orders. She was the woman for an emergency.

"What is the financial condition of your friend," Stuart asked abruptly.

"Rather uncertain," I stammered.

"Well, it doesn't much matter. A hospital would be too public, anyway, under the circumstances. We must think out some other plan."

Lilian glanced at me and said, "Then you've decided to keep this affair secret, Doctor Stuart?"

He smiled. "Since it involves a lady—yes."

He began to gather up his instruments, and, as he stooped over to arrange them in their case, Lilian Ashburton contrived to scrawl a note, setting it under a glass of water on the bureau. While he was still busy, I crossed over, and, picking up the bit of paper, read the following:

"This is your man. Watch him."

I crumpled the message in my hand. My mind was whirling now; the strain was beginning to tell. Films of blackness darted before my eyes, I felt suddenly faint, and clutched a chair. I made a futile effort to stand firmly, and then heard Lilian Ashburton say hurriedly, "He's wounded himself, Doctor—the thigh—a glass of water—why—"

CHAPTER IX

I OPENED my eyes upon the figure of Lilian Ashburton, but my surroundings

were unmistakably strange, and furnished with more pretentious ugliness than my old lodgings. I got a confused sense of stiff-brocaded draperies, cold and blue, an enormous bureau, marble-topped and crowned with medallion heads, and squat, plush-covered chairs of comfortable but ungainly proportions.

Lilian turned the dim gas-flame higher and met my look of inquiry with her infectious smile. "I wonder whether you were ever going to wake up," she said cheerily.

I drew the covers closer, and peered at the towering bedstead. "What time is it?" I queried.

"Seven o'clock," she returned. "And you dine in an hour."

"I'm so glad that all the details have been arranged," I sighed wearily.

"Yes. Doctor Stuart is a genius. He seems to run to large house parties."

"Then—"

"You are his guest."

"And you?"

"Likewise his guest."

"And Hanbury?"

"Decidedly his guest."

It was useless to attempt to reason. "You don't seem worried at the prospect," I hazarded.

"I've hardly had time. Stuart went at it all in such whirlwind fashion that I haven't recovered my breath. You let your knees go back on you, and Stuart's automobile did the rest."

"And you didn't protest?"

"Fancy such a thing—at the mercy of three men—two out of commission, and the other—" She finished with a shrug.

For a moment her flippancy awoke my distrust. "You seem almost as much of a genius as Stuart—in your own way."

She lifted her eyebrows. "And, pray, what way may that be?"

"You're always in on the critical moments of this game."

She turned aside, fingering the draperies at a window. "Winfield, if that's a reproach it's a very silly one. If it wasn't silly I'd resent it."

"Well, at least give me a coherent story," I pleaded.

She kept her position at the window. "I thought you had *some* imagination," she laughed back, "but I see that you've the dullness of your sex. The situation in plain English is this—you collapsed from exhaustion, Stuart helped matters along with a sedative, and in the interval made plans. A hospital seemed out of the question for Hanbury, so Stuart very generously threw open his doors—in short, turned his home into a hospital and retained me as Chief Nurse."

"But I don't understand—"

"Well, don't try. Just remember one thing. Stuart dines at eight o'clock, and I've a notion that you'll find the meal worth while. Your wound wasn't more than a scratch and you've slept long enough to freshen up."

"And shall I see you at dinner?"

"You forget I've another patient."

Her reply roused me. "Hanbury—" I almost whispered. "How is he?"

"Making the best of a slim chance," she returned, slowly.

I sat up in bed. "Doesn't that come near fitting our case too?"

"That depends on how you look at it."

"Don't you think we're trapped?"

She moved back into the shadow. "Caged beasts are sometimes the most dangerous," she said quietly, picking up a tray.

I checked a sigh. "I wish you were to be there at dinner," I complained.

"Oh, there will be other ladies—I have Stuart's word for that; and I may have a chance to run down for black coffee in the music-room." She swung about the room with an air of mock gentility. "They have a music-room, thank you. It's really worth the risk, and I've made up my mind for the time of my life."

Her gaiety brought a smile to my lips. "I really believe you're going to have it."

She halted before the door. "Well—aren't you?"

I looked straight ahead. Memories

of last night were tumbling in upon my enthusiasm. They were not pretty pictures. I shuddered, and drew in a long breath. "I'm afraid I can't get up the courage," I stammered.

"Wait until the game warms up," she said. "We're on the home stretch now, and it's going to be nip and tuck."

* * *

At half after seven I stood at the head of a long stairway, ready to dine with Doctor Stuart. Lilian Ashburton's enthusiasm had carried me to this point, but here I was halted by the prospect which lay before me. My clothing had been freshened up, and I had found clean linen at my disposal, but, judging from the surroundings, my costume would prove inadequate, if not ridiculous.

The provincial furniture of the room that I had just quitted prepared me for an ordinary household, over-upholstered, massive and vulgar, but as I stepped from a narrow entrance into the main hallway, I entered a new environment. The upper hall merged into a balcony, from which dropped a broad flight of steps. From this balcony, banked solidly with palms and brilliant plants, silken rugs were swung, forming a splendid background for the spacious entrance-hall below. At intervals these hangings parted, revealing heavy gilt pillars, dulled into harmony with the draperies. At the foot of the stairway, a faun blew from a slender reed a silver trickle of water, which dripped successively into three bronze basins. Lights gleamed everywhere, soft, unobtrusive, but with telling effect, accenting the Oriental richness of the scene before me.

A voice at my shoulder roused me. "What do you think of it?"

I turned and faced Stuart in his dinner clothes, his alert face mellowed by a truant geniality. "It came as such a surprise," I answered, "that I've not yet recovered. Is this some of your planning?"

"What a question to put to one who was reared in New England! I've lived in this house less than a week and I'm

not sure yet whether I'll succumb to the environment or alter it."

"You will do well to succumb," I hastened.

He smiled. "But really it's such a mixture—now the bedrooms—"

"Yes," I interrupted. "I've seen *one*, but this repays."

"It does very well for a rented house," he admitted. "I secured it from a Jewish family, who left hurriedly for Europe. That explains the Oriental touch. Shall we go down?"

I cast a rapid glance at my costume, but Stuart thrust his arm into mine and led me down the stairs. As we neared the bottom of the long flight, a slight rustling sound told me that a woman was near. Presently, through the soft light her figure shaped itself, very slender and black against the rich background. Her face was colorless, but beautifully so, and a vivid thread of scarlet lips parted in a dubious expression of welcome.

Stuart advanced and presented me.

"This is Mr. Hanbury, Miss Fownes," he said, turning away to answer a servant's inquiry.

The light sparkled upon a jet-spangled fan, opened nervously. "It is a familiar name," she said in an undertone, offering me a slender hand.

Against the black sweep of her gown her glittering fan danced like a sunbeam upon a deep, still pool, and her eyes, very large and shadowy, held the same depths and the same twinkling lights.

"I hope it carries pleasant memories," I answered, as her hand slipped from my grasp.

She glanced up at me through languorous lashes. "It is full of great promise," she said solemnly.

I searched her face. Her words were surcharged with meaning. She moved restlessly toward a center table and drew a white rose from a tall, crystal vase.

"This is so dead," she commented as she snapped thorns from the rose's stem. "One should have red roses or none at all."

A vision of Carmelita's garden, throbbing with color, flashed over me. "Ah! But they grow only in enchanted gardens," I said regretfully.

"So do all the good things of life," she answered, as she placed the flower near her heart.

Her nervous fingers bungled before the task of securing the rose, and a jeweled pin fell to the floor. I stooped over, recovered the trinket and held it out to her.

She took it from me, and said in an undertone:

"Do you recognize it?"

I looked at the green light sparkling in her hand—a four-leaf clover set with emeralds. I started. The words of Carmelita's letter came to me. "I have a stick-pin which my brother so often wore before his death, a gift from you. It is a four-leaf clover set with emeralds."

I steadied myself with a deep breath. "Yes," I whispered.

* * * *

During the strange, almost silent, dinner hour which followed, I had difficulty restraining my agitation. To find myself face to face with my enchanted princess, when she had seemed to be fading completely from the picture, was not a situation that induced calm. In the more direct light of the dining-room, Carmelita's personality did not suffer. Her beauty was shadowy and elusive, tinged with melancholy, defying a searching scrutiny.

My covert glances traveled unceasingly from the lady to Doctor Stuart. Who was this woman? And who was this man? What circumstances brought them under one roof? And why had Doctor Stuart thrown open his door to our trio?

We drank black coffee in the music-room, as Lilian Ashburton had predicted, and where Lilian joined us. As she entered the room, Doctor Stuart graciously led her to Miss Fownes' chair.

"This is Miss Ashburton," he said simply.

Miss Fownes languidly lifted her eye-

brows. "This is a pleasure *quite* unexpected," she returned, letting irony sharpen her voice.

"Miss Ashburton is a nurse," Stuart explained, anticipating a question.

The fan closed with an ominous snap. "But I am not ill!" Miss Fownes cried, starting from her seat and sinking back again.

Her vehemence startled me; her lips had paled and the flight of their animating color left her face very strained and pinched.

The shadow of an advancing figure relieved the tension, and I heard a pleasant, musical voice say:

"You need a rose or two in your cheeks to prove that."

Miss Fownes stood up. "Roses are not always red," she answered, pointing to the flower near her heart.

"One should have red roses or none at all," Stuart quoted almost mockingly.

Only her eyes betrayed her anger. "You are quite right," she said coolly, turning toward me. "Mr. Hanbury, let me present my cousin, Mr. Romero."

The music-room was illuminated by a single cluster of screened lights, so that I did not get a clear view of the newcomer until he stepped closer, offering me his hand. The name had prepared me, somewhat, so that I was not surprised to see Luis Romero before me.

His voice drawled a covert challenge as he took my hand. "I have seen Mr. Hanbury before, but we were both in something of a hurry."

His impudence puzzled me. "It is well to be—on a dark night," I returned. "Have you met Miss Ashburton?"

She was a match for his insolence, as she advanced with an air of deceiving candor. "I daresay Mr. Romero would not acknowledge it, even if he remembered," she purred. "He played such a different rôle when I last met him."

He looked every inch a cavalier as he bowed, making a sweeping gesture with his hand. "I regret to admit

that you have the advantage," he said.

"And I to own it," she answered. "Let me compliment you on your skill with the reins."

His glance searched her face. "I have had *some* practice," he said.

"Last night proved that," was her reply.

"Last night?" he echoed.

"Yes. I found your cab empty and I stole a ride. You had put up the horses before a road-house, and I slipped in when your back was turned."

"I trust you arrived safely at your destination," he ventured.

"In perfect trim, I assure you."

"And your return?" he quizzed.

"Was equally successful," she answered.

His glance included Miss Fownes, Stuart and myself, as he said gaily: "I played the rôle of coachman last night. A little trick upon some newly married friends of mine. The old games were all threadbare, so instead of white ribbons and shoes upon the coach, I fancied that a wild ride might be more to the purpose."

Lilian Ashburton's lips parted in a dubious smile. "I can't make out whether I preceded or succeeded the bridal pair, but I can vouch for a wild ride."

Romero pointed to his forehead. A square piece of courtplaster concealed the mark that the butt-end of my weapon had made. "Was I possessed of this beauty patch when you became my passenger?"

She shook her head.

"Then you *preceded* the old shoes," he answered.

I dropped back into my chair again, confused by this duel of words. Lilian Ashburton's presence in Romero's carriage was explained with tantalizing incompleteness. In the rush of perplexities, I was only dimly conscious of the people about me. It all seemed so vague and impossible. Last night black shadows and a virginal moon alternated in keeping vigil with me, now my senses were soothed by a background of dull gold and rich draperies. But even with

the scene thus shifted, I found familiar characters in the foreground; familiar characters jumbled into hopeless confusion, crossing and re-crossing one another's paths, turning up in absurd situations, dropping out and taking the stage again, without rhyme or reason; swaggering and reserved, bold and cautious, frank and deceitful, friendly and antagonistic in turn, and I, tossed like a shuttlecock, between their plots and purposes.

CHAPTER X

I EMERGED from mental confusion with a desire to strike a blow in the polite war of words that had been waged during the black-coffee hour. Up to this point, Lilian Ashburton, by drawing fire from Miss Fownes and keeping Romero parrying, had most of the victories to her credit.

"I have been admiring a bit of your work, Mr. Romero," I began bluntly.

"So?" he returned, deprecatingly, raising a hand.

"Yes. Your Bal Masque poster at Techau's."

"Ah, I thought the secret of that quite safe. Who could have betrayed me?"

"You were indiscreet enough to whisper it yourself," I replied.

"A whisper is usually meant for but one pair of ears, Mr. Hanbury," he said with quietly scornful emphasis.

"Not a stage-whisper, Mr. Romero."

He glanced at me and smiled. "You've outplayed me, but I'll not surrender without my revenge. Will you subscribe for some tickets? I daresay the Doctor has been too nice a host to peddle charity tickets. He contends it is for *charity*, you know, but we have a suspicion that his real motive is to help out a dull social season by giving us an excuse for a gay time. Two tickets did you say?"

"At least give Hanbury the chance to refuse," Stuart objected.

"Fancy charity offering any such loophole!" cried Miss Fownes.

I was resolved to see the comedy to

its conclusion. "But suppose I haven't the slightest desire to go? To begin with, I haven't a costume and the affair is almost due."

"Friday night," Romero returned, "just three days off."

"Three days!" cried Miss Fownes, "why, that's no end of time."

"Besides a man can hire a domino," Romero suggested.

Miss Fownes' placid eyes were flaming like sputtering torches. She quivered with strange eagerness, as she said:

"You must go. It will be such a beautiful sight. If Luis would only give you a suggestion for a costume, I believe he might tempt you."

I laughed. These swift changes were beginning to be amusing. A moment before we had kept one another at bay with cutting sarcasm, now we were genially discussing charity balls. An inspiration seized me. I drew Romero's sketch book from my pocket, and, handing it to Miss Fownes, drawled:

"Perhaps you will find a suggestion there."

She opened it and turned eagerly to her cousin. "Why, this must be some of your work!" she cried.

I looked squarely at Romero. "So I imagined, but Mr. Romero has already denied the soft impeachment."

His expression of feigned surprise was worthy of a larger audience. "Ah, so it was you who tried to palm off some sketches on me at Techau's a couple of nights ago! And now I find my cousin in league with you. I'm certainly suffering for the sins of that bal masque poster——"

"And a stage-whisper," I cut in.

"With a vengeance," he finished calmly, ignoring my pointed interruption.

Miss Fownes rose languidly, but her eyes still glistening as she turned the course of our conversational fencing. "If we don't choose a costume soon, Mr. Hanbury will lose the little enthusiasm he has for masked balls," she said.

Lilian Ashburton and Romero re-

sponded to her warning, but Stuart sat aloof, fiercely chewing an unlighted cigar, as they searched the sketch-book for a suitable costume. At last they came upon a pierrot, balancing a feather upon the tip of his nose, and a decision was reached.

Miss Fownes spoke softly. "This will be *very* effective if carried out properly, and then it's so easily thrown together. That counts, especially as I intended to make—"

Instantly Stuart was on his feet, his face grey. "Miss Fownes, permit me to enter an objection. You are not well enough to attempt such a thing."

Miss Fownes closed the book decisively. "My health does not concern me in the least."

"Then it is fortunate that you have friends whom it does concern," Stuart returned with studied quiet. "Besides, Mr. Hanbury's visit in San Francisco is a serious one and he will hardly find time for such trifling."

Romero smiled suavely. "Mr. Hanbury has had a frivolous moment or two before this, if I am not mistaken."

"You speak with conviction," I replied as easily.

"One does not dine at Techau's for a serious purpose," he answered, looking straight at Lilian Ashburton.

His glance confirmed what I had suspected all evening; he recognized Lilian as the woman who had supper with me at the Tavern. His observation again quickened me to a sense of conflict.

"It seems that everyone has passed judgment on our plan but Mr. Hanbury himself," Miss Fownes was saying as I looked up.

Something in her quiet insistence made me decide to drift with the situation. "I must trust to your discretion," I returned with a slight bow.

She picked up the book again. "Then you are prepared to put yourself in my hands?"

"On one condition."

"Which is?"

"That you go to the ball with me." She threw back her head and gave a

rare note of laughter. "A modern Cinderella!" she exclaimed musingly.

"Without the rags," I objected.

"Nor the ashes," said Romero.

"Nor the ugly sisters," added Lilian.

"Nor the fairy godmother," finished Stuart with grim humor.

Stolidly, Stuart met the flash of her eyes. "At least we do not lack a prince," she said, turning toward me.

I colored, an awkward silence followed, and Miss Fownes, gathering up her trailing gown, abruptly left the room.

The tension was broken by the entrance of a swarthy old woman who advanced with a dignified air toward Romero. I rose to be presented, and found that she was Carmelita's Aunt, the Signora Romero. She had a shriveled face, like a frost-bitten apple, but her small, beady eyes snapped an occasional gleam of fire.

The domestic element introduced by this quaint old lady further confused me. I was conscious that Lilian Ashburton was filling an awkward pause with small talk, but my mind soared from the group clustered informally about the black coffee, toward the lovely memory of Carmelita Fownes. As she had swept from the room, the tragic note in her face had filled me with foreboding and dread. Her unstudied sombreness of bearing spelled tragedy, she seemed cast for an unusual fate. But while I still mused, Carmelita surprised us all by re-appearing. She came into the room smiling. Instinctively we all rose. Doctor Stuart threw aside a mangled cigar and beamed encouragingly at his charge. His sudden burst of temper seemed to have died like the wind at noon-day. But I was not misled by this tranquillity, it lacked spontaneity; I was sure that Stuart's calm was a volcanic crust hardened to conceal the pot-boiling beneath.

Carmelita halted opposite me. "Of course it will be impossible for me to go to the Ball with you, Mr. Hanbury, but I'm sure the Doctor will relent and let me make your costume," she said, dropping Romero's sketch-book into my

hands. "Remember I shall expect your answer in the morning. And, now, if you will excuse me, I'll say 'Good-night.'"

We bowed solemnly. She swept from the room, followed by the Signora's pattering footsteps.

I put the sketch-book back in my pocket, and three pair of eyes followed my movements—Doctor Stuart's, flashing malignantly; Romero's, frankly curious; Lilian Ashburton's, lit with swift understanding.

Stuart was the first to speak. "You see, I've relented. Perhaps the diversion will be good for Miss Fownes. Let's run over the sketches now and decide whether her choice is the best one."

His manner was a trifle too eager. "Not to-night. We're both tired and I, for one, shall be glad to follow Miss Fownes' example."

"I must dress your wound," he said, brusquely.

"To-morrow will do for that also," I insisted.

A sudden anger flamed him. "I don't consider you a judge of that," he answered.

I smiled suavely. "You are too generous a host, Doctor, to ignore the wishes of your guest, and, besides, I daresay your other patient will be a great enough tax. How is he?"

"I have not seen him since this morning," he said, turning toward Lilian, "Miss Ashburton is the one likely to be taxed, and probably to no purpose.

"I suppose I can't see him?"

"Decidedly not."

"You are a good doctor, and a good host as well. Good night."

He gave me a keen glance. "I can speak better for *you* as a guest than as a patient," he answered.

In the security of my room I searched Romero's sketch-book and found what Stuart's eagerness had prepared me for—a note from Carmelita Fownes. The familiar sloping hand sprawled over the

pages with a new, careless impatience, which the contents confirmed:

Now that you are here (she wrote), I cannot control myself as before. A sense of security fans caution into recklessness, and I grow less and less afraid. You are not as I pictured you. The only photographs which my brother possessed of you were lost in the fire, and memory has either tricked me or you have changed agreeably with the years.

Yesterday I wondered whether you were to be swept forever from my path, and this sudden change has bewildered me. I cannot guess Stuart's purpose in bringing us together, but he has good reason for his move, and a few days will settle the question of its expediency.

We have only a short time and we must work quickly. Already I have a plan. Perhaps you have guessed it. It is but a formless plot as yet, but can you not help expand and shape it?

The masquerade costume which I am to make for you—suppose it were to serve me instead? My only hope of escape from this wretched house is in a disguise, and I can think of no time more opportune.

You see my position, and know now what obstacles confront you. The Signora rarely leaves me, and even when she does, there are servants enough on guard to keep me an unwilling prisoner. My plan lacks definiteness—I am leaving the details to you.

Ever trustingly,
CARMELITA FOWNES.

Carmelita Fownes! I repeated the words over and over again, as if a solution would spring from the mere repetition of her name. I tried to gather my clews into comprehensive shape, to force a realization of my position, but every thought revolved about the memory of a glittering fan and eyes sharing its sparkle.

I quitted my room and stepped out through a pair of French windows upon a screened porch. Here, with the lights of the City for companionship, I gathered composure. The scintillating lights fringing the bay, the broad sweep

of dusk which they sprang from, the still, cool breath of night, waking the garden into new fragrance—what was it all but the reflection of a shadowy, elusive personality, fascinating as the night, but tinged with a like sombre tragedy? I began to shudder, and as quickly checked myself.

I could not hope to understand Stuart's mental challenge, Romero's cavalier defiance, or Lilian Ashburton's acting, nor could I untangle the skein of circumstance which had thrown such an odd assortment together under one roof. Nor did I try. What use was there of such problems, when a woman's fan fluttered and danced before me? I leaned far out upon the balcony, shaping the city's lights into the glittering bauble which had so bewitched me.

"At least we do not lack a prince!"

The words came so softly that at first I took them to be merely a fancy answering my mood, but presently a low laugh broke my reverie, and, turning, I found Lilian Ashburton beside me.

CHAPTER XI

LILIAN's presence steadied me; she brought an air of practicability upon the scene, which routed my sickly imaginings as completely as the sea mists are routed by a fresh north wind. I had been so absorbed by these star-light fancies that at first it annoyed me to find how readily my mood surrendered to her, as she swept aside the romantic reveries which Carmelita Fownes inspired. But Lilian Ashburton's personality was vividly drawn and claimed a quick response. Still I felt irritated, like a child caught unawares in a fault, and, as I faced her, my impatience was not concealed.

"I am glad I found you," she hastened, "as I am not sure how soon I shall get another opportunity."

"Then you intend to leave?"

She smiled dubiously. "Your convictions are all so one-sided," she returned. "You either lack imagination or you

have not learned to ring your coins properly."

"I would have no reason to *blame* you," I faltered in self-defense.

A trace of bitterness made her tone hard and sharp. "You should have no reason to *misjudge* me," she corrected.

"What am I to believe?" I burst out passionately. "We've ceased to move in a real world. You can't expect me to gather anything but false values with such shifting scenes."

She stepped very near me, and looked up seriously. "We're moving in a real enough world. It's a little too real to suit me. There's some sort of devilment being hatched under this roof, and we've got to talk quickly and think a good deal faster than we've been doing. Understand me, I'm not afraid, we've plunged in pretty deep and it will take some rapid strokes to pull us out."

The glittering fan of enchantment snapped together at her challenge. "You're right," I said, "let's talk quickly and settle some doubtful points, once and for all."

My inferences did not miss their mark. She braced herself against the balustrade and threw her head back with some scorn. "I haven't asked *you* for a detailed account of *your* experiences since you had that last cup of tea in my apartment, but, no matter, I'll give you mine.—You left my apartment shortly after two o'clock. I followed you. You see I had been retained by the defense, and I believe in beginning work promptly. I even boarded the same car, although I dare say you never thought to look the field over. I had dinner at The Turnpike, and when it began to grow dark I got nervous. The hours wore on and still you didn't come back. Of course there was a chance that you'd slipped home another way, but I had a feeling that an unpleasant surprise had detained you. I could see that my presence at The Turnpike was beginning to arouse suspicion, so shortly after 10 o'clock I left the piazza and strolled nervously along the fringe of the sand-dunes, hoping for a

sight of you. The darkness finally frightened me, and I retraced my steps. Coming near the Turnpike House again, I heard a carriage swing up to the watering trough, and as the coachman jumped to the ground, I recognized him. It was Romero. He uncheckered the horses and went above for a drink. I knew at once that something was up. His disguise, the carriage at this hour, the nearness of Carmelita's prison, gave me a clew. An impulse seized me. Why shouldn't I ride to the scene of mystery? I walked rapidly to the carriage, found it empty and slipped quietly in. In a few moments Romero came out of the Turnpike, swung himself on the box, and we were soon swaying along at a break-neck speed to your rescue."

The simplicity and clearness of her defense shamed me into silence, and she went on:

"That leaves me only a short time to account for—between the small hours of next morning and my meeting in your old lodgings with Dr. Stuart and you. When I left you I was bent on solving one problem—how to get medical aid to Hanbury without creating suspicion. Then Dr. Stuart came into my mind. Here was a chance to test him—to discover whether I was wrong in implicating him in the mystery which you were trying to solve. Guilt would buy his silence, and if he were not guilty, it occurred to me that we could make our position pretty clear to him, especially with Hanbury, the man he had called upon three times at the Hampton, almost done to death with a cracked head. I 'phoned him, and he came, as you know. I promise you I was not asleep during that interview. He has seen Hanbury before, but he's afraid to acknowledge it. Stuart is your man, and Romero is a close second."

"And Carmelita?" I cried.

"Is largely a matter of faith with *you*. Perhaps that's why you take the trouble to mistrust others. That's part of every fanatic's creed."

She spoke bitterly, and I winced.

"And now shall I tell my story?" I asked quietly.

"If you will be quick. I told you before that I might not have such a chance again. I should not have left Hanbury this long, but I had many questions to solve to-night, and I felt I must risk it. They're giving us plenty of rope, and if we take the full length we'll hang ourselves very prettily."

I sketched the circumstances culminating in the Spaniard's death. She listened and finally put out a hand.

"You've grit," she muttered. "That's what makes it worth while."

I felt the blood in my cheeks at her praise, masculine in its brevity. "What did you make of the little scene downstairs to-night?" I asked.

"Nothing—at least nothing just yet."

"Romero is Carmelita Fownes' cousin," I urged gently.

"Which may prove everything or nothing."

"And the bal masqué tickets?"

She shrugged. "Romero has a good reason for every move, you may be sure of that."

"I suppose you've guessed at Miss Fownes' interest in the Bal Masqué costume?"

"Yes. She wants a disguise, naturally. She can't escape without that."

I started back, incredulous at her insight.

"How in the world—"

"Oh, I'm a woman, that's how," she almost snapped. "Women haven't any system. They just *feel* things. Any man can add two and two and get four, but it takes a woman to put two and two together and make five."

For a moment Carmelita's glittering fan again seemed to swing with its tantalizing gleams, but when I looked, only the lights of the city twinkled in the dusk, and Lilian Ashburton stood with a flaming sword of ridicule, to warn me from fancy's garden.

She was at my side speaking quickly and with quiet command.

"After to-night we must be very careful. I hold Hanbury's life in my hands. I can't see very far, but I know

one thing. An eminent physician doesn't make up a house-party which includes an *untrained* nurse, a battered stranger, a suspiciously beautiful woman, and Mr. George Winfield, unless he is hatching something unique. This atmosphere is a good incubator for plots, and we've got to keep the temperature down. *My* immediate duty is with Hanbury. Yours is down-stairs getting a line on Stuart and Romero. Good-night."

CHAPTER XII

URGED by Lilian Ashburton's advice, I stepped back into the gilded richness of the hallway. Most of the lights were extinguished, except a single cluster above the dripping fountain at the foot of the stairway. Before descending, I stopped to survey the field; Stuart had apparently dismissed the butler from his post at the front door, and just in front of me Romero was gliding slowly down the long flight. I followed silently, my footsteps hushed by the thickness of the rugs. Romero turned into the music-room. I did likewise, but a sudden instinct warned me to conceal myself, and, before he was aware of my presence, I slipped behind a pair of heavy window-draperies.

Stuart followed close upon my disappearance. He carried a bottle of whiskey, glasses and a syphon of soda; setting these down upon a table, he began to pour the drinks. Romero silently drained his glass; Stuart sank into a chair.

"Well," Stuart began, "your head-cracking proclivity has got us in a nice mess."

Romero flickered the ash from his cigarette. "Accidents will happen," he drawled, indolently.

Stuart narrowed his eyes. "Accident or not, I call it a bungling job. Here's a man we could have swung over with a few soft words, and you go cracking open his head on the public streets. And then to take him where you did! It's disgusting—that's what I call it—disgusting!"

"What else could I do?" Romero queried, as he shrugged. "Tell me that, if you please. There I was going peacefully about my business when a man bobbed out of the darkness like a regular highwayman. 'Mr. Romero, I believe,' he called out. I got up, bowed my prettiest, acknowledged the soft impeachment, and then he lit in. 'I'm Hanbury,' he said, 'Arthur Hanbury, and I've come to see about the way you're treating my dear friend's sister, Carmelita Fownes.' Bah! I can't stand open insults. And then, when a man talks loud a crowd always gathers. We're in no position to draw crowds. You know this as well as I do. . . . I gave the signal for the chauffeur to let her go. This man Hanbury persisted in talking and began to catch at my coat. I thrust my hand out and gave him one in the face. The machine jerked forward; he went down in a heap on the cobbles, and there he lay with a cracked skull. What was I to do? Leave him there until a crowd gathered? As it was, I had to fight to get him into the machine. No sooner did we get out to lift him up when a water-front bum jumped into the game. We got out, and we got out damn quick, let me tell you. Where else could I have taken him? What better place? You called there every day to see Carmelita, so that disposed of the question of medical attendance. Seems to me, under the circumstances, I figured the whole thing out pretty completely.

"Yes," Stuart assented drily. "Even to leaving him in charge of a crazy Spaniard — with no more brains than—"

Romero swung about impatiently. "You suggested that yourself—you know you did. Your very words when you telephoned to me yesterday were, 'I've seen our friend and he's pretty well battered up. Get them all away from there except Silva. It looks like trouble, and we don't want a large audience in on the performance.'"

Stuart turned away with a growl.

"But this second man, where did he spring from?"

"Since he's in possession of my sketch-book, I've a notion he's the water-front bum who tried to rescue Hanbury."

"Then why didn't you jump at that conclusion when he tried to return the said pocket-book to you at Techau's the other night?"

Romero was smoking defiantly. "I hardly expected to see a water-front bum playing the part of a society butterfly within a few hours of being knocked down on the public streets."

"What did you think about him then? You were apparently rattled enough at his appearance to lie about the sketch-book. Anyway, why didn't you tell me some of these details before?"

"I've scarcely had time. I couldn't indulge in these head-cracking anecdotes at supper the other night, and you haven't appeared interested enough to wait since, for any minute details. Besides, they didn't seem like very important items."

Stuart flung away his cigar. "That's only because you're a damn fool. Everything is important in such a performance. If I'd known about him right away, we wouldn't have gotten in so deep."

Romero lifted his eyebrows. "Many a victory has been snatched from defeat," he hazarded.

"I daresay. But it looks very much as if I shall have to snatch the victory myself. If I'd trusted to my first impulse and called on Hanbury the moment I knew he was in town, none of this would have happened. But, like a ninny, I let a whole day go by without looking him up. By that time he'd gone gunning for you, and a likely mess you made of it, letting that devilish Spanish temper get the best of you. This Romero pride is beginning to make me rather tired. I've come to the conclusion that I'd have done better without any of you."

"You should have tried then," Romero sneered.

"It is not too late to begin, Romero." Romero's face quivered. "Stuart, don't you threaten *me!* I'm not to be pitched overboard like so much useless cargo."

Stuart folded his hands, and an unnatural composure stole over him. "How will you go then, Romero? You object to being called useless cargo. Honestly, do you think you have been very useful? You're not sure now which is Hanbury and which is the water-front bum. I'd be willing to bet you knocked the wrong man down on the cobbles."

Romero lit a cigarette. "The man upstairs is Hanbury. You can take my word for it. This second man, who put me out of business, is a rank impostor!"

"Yes? I don't see how you're going to prove it. Anyway, that's neither here nor there. We've a Hanbury to deal with, so *there* you are!"

"*Here* you are," Romero corrected. "Hanburys, First and Second, Miss Ashburton, Carmelita Fownes, to say nothing of the Signora. Stuart, you must be crazy! You could handle two men, but *three* women under one roof— Whew!"

Stuart squirted some soda into his glass. "I like the game better with a dash of risk. Besides, don't imagine they're to have the rein I've given to-night. To-morrow I draw up tightly."

"What's your game?"

"I'm not planning a whole lot. I've trapped most of the talent. It's only a question now of what is expedient."

Romero blew a thin wreath of smoke upward. "Look out, Stuart. Don't be too sure. You may think you've won every trick, but that chemically red-headed woman who watched the game to-night has a card or two up her sleeve."

"Let them all have cards up their sleeves. They'll never have a chance to pull them on me. You say the real Hanbury's upstairs. Well and good. He's got a cracked skull. It's an even chance he won't recover. In that case— Well, I didn't kill him. The other

two—Hanbury, the Second, he's got a dead man to his credit, if the evidence doesn't lie—it's not likely the Pirate friend of yours committed suicide; and as for the red-haired lady—well, she'll decide to keep her mouth shut. They're both caught, believe me, like two flies in the syrup jug!"

Romero stretched himself, like a cat roused by a warring prod. "And after nature has kindly disposed of Hanbury, and the flies in the syrup jug have been appropriately pickled, you still have the old problem—Carmelita!"

Stuart rose. "This game has lasted five years. Hasn't everything come my way?"

"Everything but the woman."

"Well, watch her—damn it—watch her!"

"I've been watching," Romero said evenly, "for five years. I'm getting tired. I was to be paid upon delivery of the goods."

"Not so fast. You were to share in a successful outcome. I consider the girl part of the game."

Romero jumped to his feet. "Carmelita Fownes! You can't mean—"

Stuart took two long strides toward him. His face was grey and terrible. His voice shook. "And why not, pray? What is the precious combination that makes this Romero blood so unapproachable? You remember me five years ago—the unsuccessful friend of a man of position—George Fownes. You remember how I scraped and bowed and literally sucked in my breath to get a good start. You remember my success and his death, and the charge he left me—his sister. Romero, I am tired, worn out. I keep going—going—merely to forget. My practice, my social duties, even the excitement of this game we play, helps me to dodge the issue. I can't keep it up forever. I'm a man of strong passions—passions that either make or break. I've been bent—bent almost to the snapping point."

Stuart's voice ended hoarsely.

Romero moved away, shrugging with infinite disgust, as he said:

"What are you driving at, anyway?"

"Just what anybody but a fool would have seen long ago. I have loved Carmelita Fownes—*always*. George Fownes met me on equal terms in everything except my love for this sister—this he scorned with that well-bred, matter-of-fact way of his that was maddening. . . . And then, as if his studied insolence were not enough, when he died he left his sister in my charge—this sister whom he knew I loved madly. In God's name, why did he do this thing? Merely to tantalize me?" he began to pace up and down the room, nervously, working his fingers along the cord of his eye-glasses. "I saw her every day. At every turn she crossed my path. Can you imagine my feelings—swept from warmth to chill, acting the part of a foster-brother, with passion gnawing like a sickening hunger. . . . At last I forgot the dead brother and his wishes. I offered myself to her. Her scorn was double-edged. It drove me to madness—fury! At that moment something snapped within me. . . . Do you suppose for a moment that one cent of her money drove me to this? Do you suppose I couldn't make ten times these millions if I chose? Romero, you're a fool!"

Romero leaped to his feet. His eyes were blazing. "And what about yourself? Do you suppose you can win Carmelita Fownes by locking her up and killing off her friends like flies in a syrup jug, as you put it? You remember our bargain. You remember the plans—Carmelita Fownes declared insane; I, her cousin, appointed trustee, and the Fownes' millions at our disposal. That was the way you put it—*our* disposal. A wedding would be a poor wage for me. Whatever possessed me to be dragged into this mess?"

Stuart made a gesture of unconcern. "If I remember, no one *dragged* you in. You walked in—open-eyed. You had your price and—"

"Precisely—I *had* my price. Now I am to be beaten out of it. That's what it looks like to me." His eyes blazed. "Damn it all, I don't believe you. This

is a trick, a trick, I tell you! You settle your score with me or I'll—" He paused, quivering and choking with rage.

Stuart moved ponderously. "You are wasting breath, Romero," he answered almost wearily. "I tell you I *don't care!* Or, rather, I *won't* care. But you remember one thing—I'm dangerous enough as it is. If things go wrong, and you annoy me in the bargain, my final clean sweep will include you." He crossed over to Romero, and his voice echoed through the room. "I mean every word I say. Either I win easily or I die hard, and in any event I shall do just as I please."

Romero shrank back and said warningly, "Not so loud. If you were heard—"

"The buzzing of flies in a syrup-jug doesn't last long."

"But it may be sufficient to warn others."

"I don't believe there are any others to warn. We've caught them all."

Romero began to pace the room, his supple body swinging with the smooth cautious tread of a cat. He took out a cigarette, lit it nonchantly and recovered his poise almost instantly. Stuart sank back into a chair, his flame blown cold by Romero's insouciance. Standing motionless in my hiding place, I was struck by the contrast of these two men—Romero, nervous, alert, debonair; Stuart, squat and forceful, capable of swift, blind anger, or flashes of inspiration and achievement, striking even in his inaction. Romero's devilment was redeemed by picturesqueness, but no such lightness leavened Stuart's personality. Robbed of their flash, Stuart's eyes were cold, the hair about his temples thin, his face plowed with deep furrows.

Finally, Stuart rose, his heavy frame bowed, his voice calm and even, as he said:

"Romero, I'll be square with you. But remember, no mutiny. If fair dealings don't keep you loyal, one can always use force."

Romero bit his lip. "Your syrup-jug

is very deadly," he said, without bitterness.

Stuart took another drink. "But you can't deny a sweet tooth, Romero," he shot back.

After the lights were extinguished and Romero and Stuart had left the music-room, I stood in my hiding place, not daring to stir until I was sure the house was plunged in sleep.

The conversation between the two men confirmed my worst fears and the situation cleared too completely to be anything but disconcerting. The one thing that had puzzled me most—the reason for the kidnapping of Hanbury was explained perfectly. It had all come about as the result of an accident. Hanbury evidently had been shadowing Romero, waiting for an opportune moment when he could flash suddenly upon him, take Romero off his guard, and watch the effect of his accusations. I could well understand that Hanbury must have felt a reasonable doubt concerning Carmelita's story, and he decided to choose an unconventional way of proving or disproving her case. But he had not taken into account the swift passion so easily kindled in Spanish blood. The exchange of blows, the sudden lurching of the automobile, and the cold, grey cobblestones had changed a spirited interview into a near tragedy. I could understand the motive back of Romero's next move, despite Stuart's sarcasm. The flight to Carmelita's prison with the wounded man was done in a moment of panic. And, having made one false move the situation became more and more complicated. Stuart was too sensible to spill blood to no purpose, but circumstances having shaped their course, I knew him to be just the man to battle Macbeth-like against any odds to accomplish his purpose. I was not dealing with a cold, calculating, normal criminal, ready to count risks and weigh chances evenly. I was dealing with passion, stripped of all caution and reserve.

Assuredly we were trapped like flies in a syrup-jug. For myself, I had no

concern, and, for the moment, even Carmelita faded from the picture. But Lilian Ashburton— Why had I permitted this generous sacrifice in my behalf? A vague uneasiness began to stir me. A vision of her frank grey-green eyes rose laughingly to greet my somber imaginings,—grey-green eyes which peered in such genial comradeship above that adorable line of freckles that *would* defy the powder-puff. Before, she had given me moments of doubt, and even my faith in her had been falsely colored by her crudities. Now, I knew her worth; even her mistakes seemed as superficial as the artistic, but too permanent, blush that dyed her cheeks. Her spirit was unwarped, deep down she rang true.

To be sure, opposite this picture of essential worth rose one of melancholy and mystery, deep-eyed and exotic, trembling like a rare orchid in the breath of fancy. Well, must not Romance be dressed to play the part, and were grey-green eyes and indomitable freckles and a soiled grey gown the proper make-up for the rôle?

A polite sneeze recalled me. I crept along the wall and peered into the hallway. The butler had returned to his post. He was standing, his back to the door, religiously guarding the staircase. I made up my mind instantly as to my next move. In this atmosphere a bold, open play seemed destined to be the safest. I braced myself and stepped into the light; the butler's face was immovable. But I was conscious that he watched me out of sight, and I knew that in less than five minutes my movements had been reported to Stuart.

The gauntlet had been thrown down now with a vengeance, and we were ranged for a fight— A fight for freedom, too! Somehow this last suggestion stirred my pulses. The game was warming up, and, as Lilian Ashburton had said,—*from now on it would be nip and tuck.*

CHAPTER XIII

THE days following were crowded and tense. Every idle word, every quiet

smile, every whispered order given to the servants, fell upon my strained senses with false importance; but no one can say that there was not cause for taut nerves, nor can I forget the many alluring moments which crept in, despite the suppressed conflict.

To all intents and purposes, I was still an honored guest. There were no turning of locks or rattling of figurative chains, but practically I knew that I was a prisoner as surely as if all these evidences of detention were being flaunted in my face. At the front door the inevitable butler kept his calm, unruffled watch, and servants materialized out of thin air to anticipate the most trivial wishes. But even granting that I was in a position to effect an escape, the fact that Lilian Ashburton remained kept me at my post. I knew that she would not desert Hanbury at any price.

Try as I would, I could not shape Carmelita's plan, but I allowed her to indulge her hope, trusting to chance for inspiration. We were together almost constantly, occupied either with the preparations for my attendance at the masked ball, or indulging in afternoon *tete-a-tetes* upon a balcony that gave endless vistas of the Bay. But, as I have said before, at every turn a servant bowed before our orders, and lingered tantalizingly over their execution; or the Signora, silent but formidable, embroidered demurely within earshot, so that intercourse hardly rippled the depths of our purpose.

But what was our purpose? I confess that I hardly know. Every step carried me into greater vagueness. I realized only that an unhappy woman had appealed for a champion, and I had responded. Only a few days had passed since I had been beckoned into a field of romance—a field of romance, entered only at a great risk. And was it romance, after all? I could only answer for its setting of crimson and gold, and the twinkling eyes which smiled or warned me through the thin gauze of a fan, or the memory of the rose-strewn garden and the pale moon whitening it.

It had the flavor and the background, perhaps even the price, since most romances worthy the name are colored by gleaming weapons and some blood. And this is what I figured it, when the warmth of Carmelita's smile beguiled away the short November afternoons. At night, fancy was not so kind; warrants, officers of the law and the clank of ominous prison doors filled my sleepless moments. I had a wholesome dread of the law's clutch, and the Spaniard's death was not a reassuring memory. Then Hanbury's condition added anxiety. Stuart would not allow me to see him, and what little hope I nourished was fed by my trust in Lilian Ashburton. I caught only glimpses of her, drifting quickly about the halls, very alert and trim in a nurse's cap, hardly taking time for even a passing word.

I did not appeal to Lilian for help in this matter of freeing Carmelita,—why, I could not say. But I had a vague sense that her sympathy did not lay in that direction. Whatever impulse had urged her to join in my adventure, helping Carmelita was decidedly not the incentive. Now, she had a man's life to fight for, and I knew from the fact I saw so little of her, that she was fighting for this man's life with all her strength,—and, incidentally, keeping a sharp eye upon me. I never quite got away from this feeling of her eternal vigilance. To her, I was merely a picture-book hero, good for cutting a dash and filling the eye with spectacular performances, but I knew that she mistrusted my ability to finish anything that I started. She hovered, apparently with indifference, about the scene of conflict, ready to fill the breach at the first call.

Stuart was away most of the time, busy with his practice and the Bal Masque, but Romero blew in twenty times a day,—gay, debonair, entertaining, ready for a cup of tea and a chat, or even a hand at cards, if Carmelita and I were so disposed and the Signora could be cajoled from her embroidery.

As I have said, Carmelita and I found

little or no opportunity for direct communication, but I gathered many facts, even against odds—her childhood, orphaned and lonely, the years spent abroad in a convent, her love for her brother, his death, the tie of friendship which bound him to Stuart.

Then had come the declaration of love from Stuart and her refusal. A nervous breakdown had followed. The insidious influences surrounding her, backed by the prestige of her physician, had ended in practical imprisonment on the pretext that she was verging on insanity. It was a situation that could be combated only by the subtlest moves. To the world everything appeared regular. Carmelita Fownes was surrounded by loving relatives and a devoted friend. The lady might protest until doomsday, but the vehemence of her appeals only served to strengthen belief in her disorder. But was this disorder so clearly the invention of her enemies, as at first appeared? Does not madness sometimes spring from the very suggestion of its presence? Melancholy seized her swiftly, and she would pass from gaiety to gloom with tragic intensity. When she smiled, the world rippled with music, but when she frowned, a vague foreboding seized us all. I say *all*, because I noticed that even the Signora fell under the spell of her moods and the alertness with which she noted Carmelita's brooding hours told me that she, too, felt uneasy. In other words, Carmelita's reason seemed to me to hang by a very dizzy thread, which the least strain might snap. Sometimes I wondered about the Signora—Was she the dupe of these two contrasting rascals, Stuart and Romero? She was such a mixture of simplicity and depth that I might well wonder, but I did not stake too much on the innocence of her smile.

A certain grotesqueness in my position tempered my anxiety. What an odd assortment of characters had I met and through what shifting scenes they had led me—from the squalor of a Howard Street Lodging House to a velvet-hung palace on the heights!

Stuart I knew to be a man of strong passions,—passions rarely unleashed perhaps,—but straining under control, and gathering destructive force. Many a time at the thought of him, murder stalked very near, and at night particularly I felt its breath upon my cheek more than once. We were all flies in his deadly syrup-jug,—Carmelita, Lilian, Hanbury and myself. Would we ever crawl to freedom again? Was it fear or expediency that stayed the final blow? Or was Stuart abnormal enough to enjoy toying with his victims? This was the maze through which I moved circle-wise.

Having by implication encouraged Carmelita's hope of escape, my unpreparedness and anxiety increased as the decisive moment drew near. There were times when the whole move seemed the height of absurdity. Even granting her escape, how far would this victory carry her? I could see that, like a condemned criminal, Carmelita looked toward this goal as the first step to complete liberty. To be free, if only for a second, carried with it a hope from which sprang larger hopes without end. The more I thought the more convinced I became that something startling must happen, if only for the sake of forcing Stuart's hand. There is nothing more nerve-wracking than the strain of inaction, and after the first day I began to long for a call to arms. In the whole three days, not even a shadowy plan was discernible. Then, all at once, chance answered my necessity and cleared the way.

The date set for the Bal Masqué arrived. Stuart breakfasted early and I met him leaving, just as I came down stairs. He was decidedly more affable than usual, and he followed his "Good-morning" with an apology.

"I shall be too busy with the details of the ball to do more than send my carriage for you at the proper time," he said.

I sent out a sounding line. "I had almost made up my mind not to go." (He had not spoken to me about the

costume since our tilt over choosing one.)

"Ah! Then the costume is not complete! But you can readily remedy that. As Romero first told you, there will be dominoes at hand for those who come unprepared."

"The costume will be complete," I returned. "But my mood is uncertain."

He checked a sharp retort. "I shall expect to see you, or, rather, *count* upon it. The carriage will call at ten o'clock."

I merely shrugged and went into breakfast.

I had little relish for a meal, with problems crowding me so closely, and I left the house as soon as my scant breakfast was over; but even outside I found no relief from vexation, and the thought of Carmelita, building upon the hope of escape, sent me back to her. She did not come down for luncheon, as I had hoped; indeed, it was close on to five o'clock when, as I was pacing restlessly through the halls, I saw her fluttering in a restless, bird-like fashion near the staircase.

I went toward her and she waited, smiling anxiously, as I came along, holding my costume at arm's length for my inspection. The Signora had not followed her, and a servant below, guarding the door, was the only person within earshot.

"There is only one problem left," she said clearly, so that the man at the door could hear, "and that is—are you to wear a mask, or just paint and powder your face clown fashion?"

I knew this query was merely a blind, and I stepped closer, so that her next whispered words reached me. "How are things going?"

I threw open a clenched fist to express my failure.

She put her hand to her side and her eyelids drooped. "This is the last and *only* chance," she muttered thickly.

A quick step floated near. I was prepared to have the Signora burst upon us, but to my surprise it was Lilian Ashburton. She moved past, carrying a tray, and, giving us a curt nod, she

swept by and began to descend the stairs.

Another moment and I would have missed the inspiration which her presence gave, but, in a flash, my vista widened.

"Miss Ashburton!" I called. "Can you give us a bit of advice?"

I saw Carmelita check an impulse to silence me as Lilian wheeled quickly and retraced her steps.

It was all over quicker than it takes to tell it. Even the servant at the door, alert and eager, failed to follow our play.

"The Signora! Where is she?" I demanded in an undertone.

"In my bedroom," Carmelita answered.

I turned to Lilian Ashburton. "We have only you to rely on now. Do what you can."

And without waiting for them to understand, thinking only of our opportunity and the Signora's uncertainty, I walked quickly toward Carmelita's room, opened the door suddenly, and, whipping out my pistol, went in.

CHAPTER XIV

A STRANGLED scream came from the Signora as I burst upon her; she was on her knees picking some threads from the carpet, and as she stumbled up, her face, red with exertion, went suddenly white.

"I will not harm you," I said, quickly, "but there must be no noise."

She crossed herself with hurried piety, and her withered cheeks recaptured enough color to flush.

"Do you need *that* precaution," she sneered, pointing at my weapon, "when you take a white-haired woman unawares?"

"One takes many unnecessary precautions," I returned suavely.

She moved away scornfully. "You will gain nothing by this move," she said.

"I was not thinking of myself," I retorted.

Her slight body straightened and her

step was firm as she crossed over to a table in quest of her inevitable embroidery. Then, sweeping me a low bow, her head poised with patrician dignity, she said clearly:

"Let me offer you the best I can command on such an occasion—a chair, Mr. Hanbury!"

It was the old, studied courtesy of yesterday, insincere, charming, scornful, a trick that was the heritage of every Romero. I returned the salute, and seated myself, still fingering my gleaming weapon.

She dropped into a chair opposite me and went on with the unfinished pattern. Her face was calm and inscrutable, I but I knew that only a subtle mind could mask itself so deliberately. Nevertheless, her attitude disconcerted me, and I had every reason to wish that necessity had forced something more stirring.

But inactivity made speculation companionable. How successfully would Lilian Ashburton and Carmelita Fownes meet their opportunity? It was barely dusk, and nearly five hours must be dragged out before carriage-time. Then what if Carmelita's disguise failed to disarm the servant at the door? I trusted Lilian Ashburton to make a pretty job of it with her theatrical and detective training, but there were some physical handicaps—height, a lack of a striding gait, and hands too fine and elegant.

A wind from the Southeast hurled itself against the huge house, sending noisy currents of air whistling about corners and sighing down the chimney tops, and an occasional spatter of rain blew spasmodically upon the window panes; altogether it promised a wild night, and I felt uneasy and a bit ashamed. A skirmish with such as the Spaniard had some relish, but intimidating a defenseless old woman went against the grain. The absurdity of the situation saved it, and I began to wonder what would happen if the Signora called my bluff, and made a femininely-shrill protest at her detention. I still kept my weapon flashing sugges-

tively, but the Signora emphasized her unconcern by plying her needle with unusual deftness, not so much as lifting her eyes. That she considered my threats seriously enough to remain docile was certainly no compliment to my chivalry.

At seven o'clock a servant, knocking on the door, inquired for orders as to the service of dinner.

I think the Signora had an impulse to test my bravado, for she hesitated a moment over her answer, but finding my pistol still warning her, she answered that both Miss Fownes and herself would dispense with a meal that evening. I smiled grimly, and she fell to her task again, sneering.

As the rain pelted against the window and the wind sang, I smelled powder and saw the Spaniard go down in a heap before me, and heard carriage wheels cut the fine white sand as they sped swiftly by every trembling willow bough. A shudder roused me, and, glancing up, I found the Signora, lured from her needle-work, gazing intently at me, and I started again, like a child suddenly terrified upon a lonely road by a strange footfall.

She recaptured her attention instantly, but something about her look shook my self-sufficiency and put me on my guard. I rose and paced the floor, watching the corners of her mouth twitch with ill-concealed satisfaction at my uneasiness. It was eight o'clock now, and the wind still high and rising. Outside I could hear carriages rolling up and down the streets, and automobiles shrieking swiftly by. But if any sound of life echoed through the halls, I did not hear it, and the only occupants of the house might well have been the Signora and myself.

Knowing how answerable the Signora must be to Stuart for Carmelita's safekeeping, I could not but marvel at her complacency. To see her slight, transparent fingers not so much as trembling over their task, filled me with wonderment and admiration. I tried to match her composure, but failed. My race had nerve and a cool head, but

also a dash of impatience, while the stock from which the Signora sprang was trained in artifice, deep and treacherous as a tranquil pool. So, while she plied her needle, outwardly calm, I ruffled the atmosphere and fretted the hours away, though I daresay that the situation made more of an assault upon her nervous energy.

At last the strain was broken by a gentle knock upon the door, very soft and apologetic, culminating in three distinct taps.

"Hush!" I breathed softly, "Who is that?"

The Signora's face blanched. "Romero," she returned, as gently.

"Answer him!" I whispered.

She tossed her sewing aside, and, for an instant, faced me defiantly, her black eyes blazing.

I stepped close enough to feel her quivering breath upon my face. "Remember I understand Spanish," I warned.

She glided over and put her lips to the door. "Luis! Luis!" she said in a low voice.

"Carmelita!" he called back.

"No—no—it is I,—she is asleep."

"Has—has *he* gone—to the ball?"

For a moment she closed her eyes, as if to shut out the sight of my shining weapon. Then, as she drew a deep breath, she lied softly, "Yes, he's gone."

I heard his villainous chuckle, and then he said:

"Good! That's the last of him! Now for that red-headed woman! Au revoir!"

For a moment his words stunned me. What was this new plot? I might have known—it had all come about too easily. Stuart had insisted on my appearance at the ball with some purpose in view. I was to be lured from the house, bundled into a carriage, and—Carmelita must be called back! Who knew what fate awaited her? But the impulse to save Carmelita died before the significance of Romero's last words:

"Now for the red-headed woman! Au revoir!"

Lilian Ashburton! . . . Romance,

the glitter of Carmelita's fan, the melancholy of her appeal, the witchery of her smile—how all these pretty baubles were shattered against Lilian Ashburton's need! Having disposed of me, the next step was to clear Lilian from their path. Would they act at once or save their energies for a more convenient season?

A quick movement from the black figure drooping before the door roused me. The Signora was fainting. I sprang to her assistance. She fell away from me, straightening herself suddenly, and two points of steel flashed.

I raised my arm, struck out blindly with my free hand, and heard a cry escape her.

At my feet lay a pair of scissors, and in a corner stood the Signora, pasty-white, clutching at her wrist. My wild thrust had struck home and knocked the improvised weapon from her hand.

"One takes many unnecessary precautions," I murmured, sweeping her a bow.

She bit her lip. "Another second and you would not have had a chance to sneer so boldly," she said almost proudly.

I looked at my watch. It was half after ten o'clock.

CHAPTER XV

IMPULSE dominated me as completely as it had done only a few hours before, when the opportunity to free Carmelita presented itself; if Romero was concerned with any immediate plot to harm Lilian Ashburton, he must be detained.

I swung open the door and caught him emerging from the shadows and beginning to descend the stairs.

"Romero!" I called loudly, screening myself from the view of the sentry at the door.

He turned, hesitated, and finally retraced his steps.

"I understood that you had gone," he said with ordinary quiet.

"No—I changed my mind."

He pointed to the pistol in my hand.

"Practicing?" he queried.

"No—merely keeping the Signora company."

He stared and then laughed. "Forgive me if I have interrupted a tête-à-tête—Good-night!"

I cocked the pistol into a menacing position. "I should much prefer to have you stay. We were planning a three-handed game of cards, and I am sure that the Signora will be charmed."

He grimaced, but accepted his defeat, and I followed him into Carmelita's apartments. The Signora had resumed her patient stitching and only a faint flush on her cheeks betrayed her concern.

"Mr. Romero almost escaped us," I said. "Apparently he misunderstood your message."

It was her turn to be puzzled, but she faced the situation calmly. "The door is unusually thick," she answered, "and I whispered rather faintly."

Romero had folded his arms and was standing aloof with amused insolence.

"I don't see any sign of cards," he ventured.

"Cards?" echoed the Signora.

"Yes—if you will be so kind as to get them," I said. "Mr. Romero is to take a hand with us in a few quiet games."

She gave us both a hurried, hopeless look, and rose to do my bidding.

Up to this point Romero had treated my determination rather lightly, but now, seeing that I was in earnest, he lost some of his nonchalance.

"This looks to me, Hanbury, like an unpleasant joke," he said as the Signora drew up a card-table and threw a fresh deck of cards down upon it.

I looked at him coolly. "Unpleasant, perhaps, but certainly no joke, Romero, you may be quite sure of that."

He took the chair which I drew up for him and the Signora fluttered into a seat opposite. Still gripping my pistol, I made the trio complete. The Signora dealt, and Romero grinned through open fingers but did not deign to pick up a card; I laid my weapon down, keeping my hand upon it.

"Mr. Romero," I warned, "the

Signora and I always play promptly."

Even now he was not quite sure whether to take me seriously or not, but as my fingers tapped the trigger of my pistol, he gathered his cards together.

Once he had gauged my temper, Romero was silent, making no comment, asking no question, not even voicing a protest, and the Signora, equally uncommunicative, threw out her cards and blinked at me with maddening calm.

What impulse prompted this game of cards I do not know, but I am certain that it saved a desperate situation from violence. Had I attempted to hold two prisoners without furnishing them with a diversion, tense nerves would have snapped. The monotonous shuffle of cards, the mechanical plays, the occasional flash of interest arrested by the possibilities of a good hand, even though urged by a menacing pistol, were enough to stem the undercurrent of plot and purpose. How many hands were dealt, how many tricks were taken, how many points were made, the memory of these has passed, but I can still recall the bloodless lips of the Signora pressed together in mingled fortitude and repression, and the uneasy glimmering of Romero's eyes.

My own thoughts were in confusion. Into what new horror had Carmelita escaped? Romero must have known that she had escaped. Every circumstance must have proclaimed this to him. But did he suspect in what guise? If he now knew that she had taken my place in Doctor Stuart's carriage, would he permit her to ride to certain death? I waited for him to break into a passionate confession, but nothing came of this hope. Perhaps it was already too late. Such business was usually accomplished with dispatch. More than once I was on the verge of flinging cards and pretense aside and forcing an answer to silence my rising fears, but still I kept my counsel and still the game went on, silent, ghostly, terrible.

The possibility that our plans had failed tempered my anxiety for Car-

melita's safety. Perhaps she had not yet left the house, perhaps the opportunity for flight had not presented itself as readily as I had thought, or if she *had* escaped, perhaps Lilian Ashburton had found another way to accomplish it. If my plot had failed I could see no further hope of relief for Carmelita. It was not likely that they would give her another opportunity to trick them, and my lips must remain sealed in any event, since I had played enough with fire to receive some scorching myself.

All my fine romance had collapsed as suddenly as a dismantled circus-tent. I still felt keenly a desire to rescue Carmelita, but the glamour was gone. The flash-light of circumstance had searched out over-values and left only a sordid background. In the new scheme of life which chance had carved for me, I found it easy to eliminate all the figures, save one,—Lilian Ashburton. And it was this fact that prompted me to prolong the farce, keeping an uneasy hand on my weapon and two equally uneasy eyes on the Signora and Romero, sparing enough thought for my next play, and enough bravado to sustain my acting.

The first grey note of dawn was coming faintly through hurricane and rain, when we were roused by a knock on the door, ending in three distinct raps, suggesting Romero's tapping.

I saw a look of terror in the Signora's face, and even Romero caught a quick breath and gripped a chair. The next thing I knew, the door had opened and Carmelita Fownes stood before us.

Her hair was dishevelled, her eyes were wild, and the Pierrot costume which clung to her figure was limp and wet. Instinctively our trio started up with a concerted exclamation. Carmelita sank into a seat.

"Ah! How I have danced! How I have danced!" she cried.

"She is mad!" Romero whispered to me.

I went over and shook her. "Carmelita! Miss Fownes!" I commanded, "Where—what have you been doing?"

She began to laugh. "*What have I been doing?*" She thrust her hand toward her bosom, drew forth a blood-stained knife, and let it fall to the floor. "*What have I been doing?* Come and see."

We followed her down the broad, sweeping staircase. The fountain was dead and the lights garishly mocked the coming day. At the door the attendant seemed paralyzed with fright.

Carmelita Fownes unlocked the huge oak doors. A gust of wind flung them wide apart. There, in the grey morning, lay the body of Doctor Stuart.

Upon the threshold of his home, within call of his servants, he had fallen, face downward, and a stream of blood stained the rain-washed step.

Romero turned pale; the Signora dropped to her knees.

Carmelita Fownes fell back, chuckling horribly . . . I felt faint.

"She is mad, quite mad, *now*," Romero was saying as I steadied myself.

CHAPTER XVI

IN the excitement following I lost my bearings. I remember that we lifted Stuart's body into the music-room, and that Romero smoked cigarette after cigarette with astounding unconcern. I remember, too, that a sudden rage at his heartlessness sent me in a passion to my room.

Stuart was dead and Carmelita Fownes had paid the penalty of revenge with her reason. Little by little the circumstances which had shaped this final tragedy emerged from obscurity. Carmelita had escaped from the house about half past ten, but instead of going to the ball, she must have dismissed the carriage and stood all night in the rain, waiting for Stuart's return. Had she planned all this from the first, or had the idea seized her at the moment when she was winging her way to freedom? Romero's mocking words dinned themselves into my brain: "She is quite mad now!" Yes, she was quite mad now, and Romero and the Signora were ready to swoop down

like two vultures upon the spoils. Stuart had been hoisted by his own petard, the phantom of insanity which he conjured up to gain his point suddenly become a reality and swept him before it. There was an elemental, primitive, justice in the outcome. I had no regret for Stuart, yet his death did humanize him as his life never could have done. Now that he was gone, my fears were at rest. Lilian Ashburton was safe, and I was no longer a prisoner. This suggestion of freedom stirred my pulses. I clapped on my hat and strode downstairs, determined to test the new-found security of my position. The sentry still guarded the door, bland, dignified, immovable. I paused at the fountain, and, half closing my eyes, looked back upon the haunting beauty of the entrance court. The electric lights, still gleaming, were paled by the daylight, and the fountain reflected only ghostly glints of silver instead of warm gold. The sparkle and glitter were gone.

Turning my back upon such haggard splendor, I stood, waiting for the flunkey to open the front door, but he looked straight ahead and ignored me.

I put out my hand to turn the knob, and then he moved between me and the door, and said monotonously:

"Mr. Romero desires that no one leave without his consent, sir."

"He couldn't have meant me," I returned, hurriedly.

"I never misunderstand or disobey Mr. Romero, sir," was his answer.

I halted another servant who was mounting the stairs. "Will you explain to Mr. Romero that the butler is detaining me," I said.

The man bowed, and came back quickly with the answer.

"Mr. Romero regrets that you are inconvenienced, but sends word that the butler is merely carrying out instructions, sir."

"Then I am to be detained?"

"Such was Mr. Romero's orders."

"May I see him?"

"Not now. At noon, sir, in the study."

"He told you that?"

"Yes, sir. In case you raised the question, sir."

I looked from one to the other; their calmness was convincing. I felt that they were prepared for any emergency, and an impulse to force an exit died.

"Then, Miss Ashburton,—I must see Miss Ashburton," I insisted.

The second servant smiled. "Miss Ashburton is in conference, sir, with Mr. Romero."

There was no further room for argument, so I mounted the stairs and went directly to my room. Now that I was upon the threshold of freedom, this latest move was maddening. What was Romero finding to say to Lilian Ashburton? I looked at my watch. It was eight o'clock. I had four hours to wait, but I was learning to be patient.

The morning dragged away, and at noon I found him pacing slowly up and down the study, humming with delightful unconcern.

He stopped short when I entered the room, and smiled charmingly.

I spoke first, striving to be calm. "Romero, I sent a message to you by one of the servants this morning, and from your reply I can only conclude that you misunderstood."

His shoulders rose with tantalizing scorn. "That has never been one of my failings," he commented.

"Well, let us blame it on the servant, then," I ventured.

"Doctor Stuart's servants have been trained never to misunderstand."

"Nor to disobey," I finished.

"Precisely."

"Then you have overstepped yourself, Romero, and I must beg that you allow me to leave this house—at once."

"You have permission, my dear fellow. You may go at any time. You were Stuart's guest—you are not mine."

"You mean—"

"Just what I say."

"I don't quite follow your turns."

"Is it necessary? I thought freedom was the thing most to the point."

"Well, Romero, do you find it surprising that I feel like moving cautiously?"

He smiled. "Yes—rather. I hadn't supposed that prudence was your long suit."

His derision nettled me. "Perhaps not when it involved only myself, but now—"

"Why blame everything on the lady?" he interrupted, with a drawl.

"Because," I returned unblushingly, "that's been quite the fashion ever since Adam first set the example."

He moved toward the window. "Even the lady is gone. I dismissed Miss Ashburton promptly at nine o'clock."

"Dismissed?" I gasped. "And the patient?"

"Mr. Hanbury do you mean?" he flashed, narrowing his eyes. "Mr. Hanbury is now in charge of a *trained* nurse. Stuart's methods and mine are *quite* different. Stuart was on giving *nature* the upper hand. You know what that means in Hanbury's case. One funeral from this house is sufficient. The Romeros have influence, but it's well not to tug too strongly on any one line."

"Oh, then, you believe in pulling an occasional fly out of the syrup-jug—is that it?" I sneered.

He reddened. "Precisely," he snapped.

"You take this coolly, Romero," I ventured. "Are you aware that I know the whole situation? And your place in it? I should think you'd be ashamed to face me—upon my word I would."

He lit a cigarette with picturesque indolence. "What an amazing conscience you English-sired race have. Or do you make these star plays just from a feeling of moral superiority? My position may not be enviable, but what are you going to do about it?"

"Do? Why should I do anything. The silent testimony of Doctor Stuart—dead, to say nothing of what Hanbury will tell when he comes to his senses. Either circumstances ought to do the trick without me turning a hair."

He puffed his cigarette. "Don't you worry about Stuart or Hanbury. I can hush up the first unpleasantness—I've hushed up worse scandals in my day. And, as for Hanbury, in less than a fortnight he'll dine at my table and laugh at my jokes—that is if he lives, and I'll bet two to one on his appetite and his laugh in less than that time."

"Well, then, wait until I present my side of the case."

"Your side of the case? Liberating a nervously wrecked woman, stepping into a stranger's shoes, shooting down a man in cold blood. Your side of the case won't make much of a flash. Winfield—yes, I know your name—Winfield, don't be a fool!"

The smile on his lips, his nonchalance, the fearless light in his eye brought me to a sudden realization that the comedy was finished and only awaiting a speedy curtain.

I crossed over and looked at him squarely. "No, I'll not be a fool, Romero. You've the whip-hand up to a point—I'll grant you that. But remember, I *do* hold a card or two up my sleeve—and so does Miss Ashburton. We'll keep our eyes on you,—and watch your play."

"Which means—in plain English?"

"That we expect you to be square with Miss Fownes."

He polished his finger-nails upon his coat sleeve. "These are your terms, then? You're quite sure you don't expect any—"

I cut him short. "These are my *only* terms," I answered brusquely.

He bit his lip and the blood rushed to his face. "Well, will—will you take my hand on it?" I looked down at his slender, tapering fingers and touched them lightly.

He threw his cigarette aside and laughed. "Do you know, it's curious, but Ashburton—Miss Ashburton made the same demands. You're a queer pair—you and your red-headed lady." He stopped and cleared his throat. "Only I'm a bad lot and all that, Winfield, but I'd have

played fair anyway—upon my word I would."

CHAPTER XVII

I FOUND everything at the Sunnyside Apartments in its place—the chenille-draped cosy corner, the scroll-saw hat-rack, the hand-painted umbrella stand, even the mingled odors of light house-keeping and escaping gas. And in Lilian Ashburton's apartments nothing had changed. The folding bed, the bureau, the table, the three chairs, the wash-basin and the small gas stove were all cluttered together in delightful inharmony. But most welcome of all was the grey figure bending over the flame too intent on brewing tea to do anything but call for me to enter.

Her eyes smiled as she looked up from her task, a little wanly perhaps, but still full of frankness and comradeship.

"When did they let you out?" she demanded genially.

"At twelve-thirty, to be exact," I returned, laying down my hat.

She began to pour tea. "Well, it's all over, isn't it?" she mused.

"All but dividing the spoils," I said drily.

She stopped. "Dividing the spoils?" she echoed.

"Yes. You remember our bargain. You were to share in the prospects—anything the game offered."

Her hand shook as she handed me a cup. "Well, I've had my share, Winfield. I'm satisfied."

"It isn't a question of being satisfied. It's a question of sharing in what's coming to you. When I saw Romero, naturally I presented my demands. And naturally—"

A frightened look came into her eyes. "Winfield, don't make me ashamed of you now we're on the home-stretch. I told you once that you were a picture-book hero! I want you to live up to that." She raised her hand high above her head. "I've put you up there—Don't come crashing down at the eleventh hour."

I laid my cup aside. "But when you hear what my demands—"

"I haven't any desire to hear what they are."

I smiled. "Not the least bit curious?"

"No, not the least bit curious."

I leaned over and caught her hands. "You've lost faith in me, haven't you?"

"No—not exactly."

"You're a little afraid that perhaps—" She shook her head. Above the line of freckles two tears glistened. "Just a little afraid that perhaps I've played the game unworthily. Lilian, there are no spoils—not a five cent piece. But I did make a demand—the same demand that you did—a fair play for Carmelita Fownes. Now are you satisfied?"

She drew away as I rose. Her voice was husky, but otherwise she kept a tight rein on her emotion.

"Yes, I'm satisfied. You've pulled me out of that rut. You never can understand just what that means to me."

"I only understand my own unworthiness," I answered, opening my arms.

She raised her eyes with joyful defiance—the Lilian Ashburton of old—dashing, reckless, unafraid, and her words carried me back to the day when first she had bolstered my failing courage.

"That's another thing that makes you such a delightful—"

"Fool," I finished gently, as I drew her to me.

[THE END]



THEY tell me that girlish poke bonnets are being worn again. I'm glad, for now I shall know the names of all my friends who are over thirty-five.



A WOMAN can remember always the men that have kissed her. As she grows older she forgets only how she managed to make them do it.

CHAPTER XVIII

By a curious coincidence, an early December issue of the daily paper contained these two announcements; the first among the columns of the society chat, the second tucked obscurely away with other like cut-and-dried details:

Society will miss keenly the presence of Luis Romero, who leaves for an extended tour of the continent. His trip is not altogether a matter of pleasure, as he is accompanying his cousin, Miss Fownes, who since the tragic suicide of Doctor Stuart has suffered a nervous breakdown. Miss Fownes has been an invalid since the death of her brother, but it is hoped that new scenes will restore her to her previous health. The party includes Miss Fownes' aunt, Miss Romero, and Mr. Arthur Hanbury, of New York, who will go with the trio as far as his home city. Mr. Hanbury himself is not in the best of health, having met with a painful accident while automobileing in San Francisco. The rôle of nurse will be a new one for our debonair favorite, but Luis' friends all proclaim him the man for any emergency.

* * *

Married

Winfield-Ashburton. In this city December 6, 19—, by the Rev. Alex. White, Mr. George Winfield of San Francisco and Miss Lilian Ashburton of Seattle.

BY A HAIR

By Forrest Halsey

HE realized with slow, sure horror that he was waking up; gave a groan; buried face and fists in pillow; shuddered through all his long length, and tried to lay violent hands upon sleep. But sleep, a damsel of coy and retiring disposition—(in the morning)—twisted her skirts from his grasp, departed; leaving him to face that insistent, cold-blooded collector of debts of the night—day.

There is something so crude and unreasonable about day. Its manners are of the worst, coming into our privacy without as much as a by-your-leave; telling us over and over again (as if once were not boresome enough) what we did when we did not know we were doing it and didn't care; of how we spent what we should not have spent; kissed those we should not have kissed; left unkissed those we ought to have kissed, and that there is no health in us. Such was this day to Mr. Phillipse.

Mr. Phillipse refused to open his eyes to greet such a day. If he could not sleep, he could at least remain with eyes closed until he starved to death; or his debts were outlawed; or some of his creditors burst his door and murdered him. He wished he had thought to get himself murdered the night before. But when one is in one's cups one always puts off till to-morrow what should be done that night. He would at least not open his eyes until he had gathered courage enough to summon the janitor-valet and see if it were possible to get one more drink and one more service of coffee. He groaned again as he thought of how, by just holding back a little bit of the money he had spent the night before, the janitor

might have been appeased—not paid, that was perfectly impossible.

"Oh," groaned Mr. Phillipse, "and I remember distinctly that I was, during my last conscious moments, buying champagne for strange cabmen."

The thought of what little real economic good that champagne within the persons of strange cabmen would now do him caused another groan.

If he had been younger he would have feverishly arisen and looked through his clothes for money, and found therein naught but unknown addresses of unknowable people. But, as he was forty, he no longer had the high hopes of youth.

Peter Van Corlear Phillipse was forty—in the mornings. Afternoons his slim figure and blond distinction took him down to the lower thirties. At night he could be passed for a passably good counterfeit twenty-eight. He was one of those charming men who, by yielding to every temptation, do not mar their youthful good looks by any aging struggles. Even his debts could not write their figures upon his brow, nor his love affairs dim the limpid purity of his blue eyes. He had a good manner; no morals; no money; no prospects, and a wife who liked him very much, but had been forced to go to work. When he had last heard of her she was at a fashionable springs in Virginia and laboring very hard trying to launch and, if possible float, a very heavy steel family from Birmingham, Alabama. He was really fond of her, and true to her, after a fashion, making it a point to, as far as possible, love only blondes—for that was her coloring. At times he had much trouble in ex-

plaining to them why he called them Lydia, which was his wife's name.

In her last letter she had told him, in the kindest manner, she was going to divorce him, because her work was hard and his prospects hopeless, and she must take thought for her old age. Mr. Phillipse's income consisted of such commissions as he could extract from the shops that Bullard Britt patronized, and such chips of gilt as he could knock off that highly gilded youth.

It is not necessary to introduce Mr. Bullard Britt, as that (to shift the metaphor) bounding calf of mammon is well known. Peter Phillipse was of the inner circle, possessing the calf's private telephone number (in modern natural history calves, bulls and even sheep possess them), a secret to be guarded with one's life blood. If one betrays a man the chances are that one will never be discovered, but if one betrays his private telephone number the first silvery insistent voice that calls up will betray the betrayal. One can explain away many things, but not a lady at the other end of a private wire. Mr. Phillipse's small, precarious income would have vanished utterly if into any shell-like ear he had whispered the solemn secret—"27 I."

Mr. Phillipse's condition—(when he refused to open his eyes and face)—was indeed serious. Bullard Britt had packed his fat person into his fat car and gone out of town. Before leaving he had parted with a small sum to Mr. Phillipse, who in return had, he knew without examining his clothes, parted with it to persons unknown for pleasures not even to be surmised beyond that they grow and flourish best when moistened liberally. He had not intended to moisten them at all. No, not by the merest sprinkle! He had intended to mollify the janitor-valet; but the janitor-valet was unmollified; day was here; creditors would presently be here, and, though, of course, they could not get in, a sensitive man does not like to crouch in his bed and listen to coarse voices shouting vulgar suspicions and brutal certainties to a listening hall.

Suddenly Mr. Phillipse had a most refreshing thought:

Why, unless he was mistaken, he was out of town himself. He had some memory to that effect.

One may be forgiven for not recalling at once such really pleasant little things after such a night, or rather day, as he had spent. The room upon which his relieved eyes opened had a familiarly unfamiliar look. His childhood recollections were filled—(when he cared to fill them)—with just such gracious spaces; with just such gleaming reflections from dull mahogany, mahogany that looked as if it were at home, and was not week-ending with some wealthy family; flowers on the chintz hung walls were such as might have bloomed on the walls that had seen his boyhood in the family home (long since become changed into a roadhouse), in New Jersey. The wide, deep windows showed a pleasing, if rural, sunshine, and bucolic, not suburban, apple blossoms.

"Heavens! Where am I?" said Mr. Phillipse.

II

THE question had often been forced upon him during his life. It had lost all the element of real novelty. His emotions were steeled to seeing anything when he opened his eyes, from the bars of a police cell—(in spite of his gentle manner there were limits to the outrages that could be put upon him by anyone not lending him money)—to the placid face of an utter stranger upon the pillow beside him. He had, when in the condition known to Omar and Noah, little or no knowledge of what he was doing, but did it with such a grave, dignified, nay, elaborately sorrowful manner that even absolute strangers had been known to be unable to resist whatever roof and bed he had felt himself constrained to force upon them. His wife said of him that, when he was not himself, he was irresistible.

"Well—well," said Mr. Phillipse, with a personal approbation that he had

not thought to bestow, "I must have gone visiting. It seems to me that sometime yesterday someone told me that if I was going somewhere I had better go. Probably it was a bartender whom I had asked to cash a check. No—I rather think it must have been one of those cabmen. I wish that cabmen did not move me to such tenderness, but it is a certain kinship I have with their class. My best days came before taxis. If one makes the chauffeur drunk he runs into things; if you do not he insists on your bill being paid. The old days, when gentlemen without money gave their keys to cabmen and they brought them back in the morning, are over. The good days are all over; café drinking has gone out. I wish I were not such a conservative and could adopt the new ways and be content to get drunk in the clubs. But it always seems such a waste of energy to get drunk in a club—so *nouveau-riché*. Besides, what club would I get drunk in? I believe that my last one has ceased to send me letters. Ah me! I'm getting old. Now, where am I?"

The room refused to answer the question. No doubt its walls had had many such a one addressed to it in the good gone times when liquor was supposed to be in gentlemen, not in efficiency lectures by the Board of Health.

"I'm visiting somebody—somebody of refinement," continued the thoughts of Mr. Phillipse as his eye fell upon the night table with its boxes of fresh, cigarettes and the latest magazines—"and civilization," he added on glimpsing through an old door the shine of new tiles and rubber bath curtain, "Is it New Jersey or Long Island? It seems to me those apple blossoms are out very soon for rural ones. The last time I noticed trees— But then one pays such little attention to the habit of trees from an automobile—"

Suddenly a wave of horror, physical and mental, engulfed him:

"Can it be that I'm at Blanche's!"

His startled gaze flitted over the room. It was not familiar. Yet, as he tremblingly reflected, he had not slept

in every room in Mrs. Wenton's house.

He clasped his aching head in feverish hands. He remembered kissing somebody; or somebody kissing him!

In his memory, as in a cut up puzzle, bits, utterly unmeaning in themselves, began to fit together into a logical whole. He remembered being on a train; years on a train, a very dry train, moistened in time by a gentleman with a commercial mustache and a quart bottle; there had been a station, an automobile, and then lights, and a somebody, a familiar somebody, whom he had either kissed, or who had kissed him; the kissing had been so quickly done as to imply an old situation of similar character.

"I know what I've done," he cried with bitter despair, "I've come to see her. Probably when that cabman sang 'When the war is o'er, we'll part no more' I was so touched by the thought of all those letters of hers I never found time to open, that I ran right out here to Bernardsville. I've kissed her! Oh, Lord! I've kissed her! Oh, Lord, it's all on again! Oh, my God, it's all on again! Now, she'll never part from me until she knows his telephone number!"

III

ANY man of the world will understand Mr. Phillipse's feelings. To break a long friendship (purely a platonic one, let us hope), to exert oneself to the utmost to do so; to feel glad and free when letters no longer arrive in the morning's mail; and telegrams are no longer found under one's door; to realize at last that one is relieved from the maddening position of being loved to devotion because one can be of use as a stepping stone to the heart of a friend, and then to find that one has rushed back into the snare; closed the trap; permitted one's wings to be sheared away; raised again all the dangers of parting with a private telephone number, and so losing one's only source of income, such a man can understand Mr. Phillipse's emotions as he

staggered from his bed to the open window.

"By gravy! I'll be darned if this looks like Bernardsville," said Mr. Phillipse to the unknown landscape of soft sunlight and violet distances. "Perhaps," hope woke in his heart, "perhaps it was not Blanche that I kissed. Perhaps—perhaps this is Montclair."

The thought was vivifying.

A very charming Mrs. Cushman lived (frequently) in Montclair. Mr. Phillipse had been of late almost tempted to believe that Hortense Cushman loved him for himself, and not Mr. Britt's telephone number. Often he had thought of finding out. Perhaps he had found out. In that case it would be delightful.

"Yet," he reflected, gazing with distrust from the window, "this scenery does not look expensive enough for Montclair; nor sufficiently *nouveau-riche* for Bernardsville. It looks—now, how charming it would be if it were Hortense. How utterly charming! But if this place is Blanche's— But somehow it does not look like Blanche's. Oh, who in the devil did I kiss? I am sure it was *somebody* I know."

Suddenly an idea came with all the delight of a morning drink to help him out of his troubles. Perhaps the Lord had been kind.

If a hair had been left on his coat, and that hair was red, it would be Blanche; if brown, Hortense.

He sprang to his coat.

There was a hair upon it.

But the hair was grey.

"Oh, Lord! it might be either," he cried bitterly.

IV

Pity his position. To the severely logical mind the kissing of an unknown lady may present no problems on such a morning. That sort of a mind can dress its body and descend to discover the object of its lips. To be sure Mr. Phillipse could have done the same. But there were difficulties. Once kissed, a woman expects to be treated

in a little more colorful manner than before. To descend into an unknown house and detect among unknown ladies the recipient of one's attentions and, while doing so, give to one's manner exactly the right shade to each and every one, is a task from which a gentleman, in the somewhat shaken condition of Mr. Phillipse may be pardoned for shrinking.

"But she was not an unknown woman," pondered Mr. Phillipse, "I'm perfectly certain that I knew her well. And, what happened afterwards? Did we quarrel?"

He turned abruptly, hastened to a door in a side wall and gently tried to open it.

"What in the devil do you want? What in the name of several unmentionable things do you mean by making so much noise in there? Let me tell you, by all that is untellable, that I want to sleep," growled a fat voice from the other side of the locked door.

Mr. Phillipse stood in the attitude of Meditation before the portal of Life.

The fat voice belonged to the fat person of Mr. Bullard Britt.

"Only one thing is absolutely certain: That I did not kiss him," said the astounded Mr. Phillipse.

A light tap came at the hall door and there entered an ancient, egg-headed Ethiopian carrying a tray which held silver cups, frosted with delicious coldness and filled with a brown, ice-strewn liquid, out of which sprouted fragrant stems of mint.

Without a word Mr. Phillipse crossed the room and emptied one of the silver cups.

"Mornin', sar," said the egg-headed one, with that fine, old-fashioned politeness. "Hope you slep' well, sar. Welcome to Funston Hall, sar."

"To where?"

"Funston Hall—Virginia, sar."

Mr. Phillipse reached for the tray and drank the other two mint juleps, then motioned the egg-headed one out of the room and closed the door in his face.

"Now," said Mr. Phillipse, with a long sigh, "I can think."

V

THE presence of Mr. Bullard Britt in the next bedroom; the mention of Funston Hall, to say nothing of its fine, old-fashioned custom of sending a mint julep to the men in the morning, assisted Mr. Phillipse to clarify the situation, which was, undoubtedly, that Mr. Bullard Britt, having gone to visit his aunt, Mrs. Maturin Skinner, in her recently purchased and suddenly improvised ancestral home, Funston Hall; and having left, as has been said, an utterly inadequate amount to console his friend, Mr. Phillipse, in his absence, his friend had, doubtless, on finding the amount running low and his own bitter feelings high, followed Mr. Bullard Britt to Funston Hall in the hopes of replenishing his funds—an utterly hopeless hope, as Mr. Phillipse now saw, owing to the fact that Mr. Bullard Britt had almost violently expressed no desire for his company. In fact, he saw with much clarity that his connection with Mr. Bullard Britt, and with it any hopes of an income, was now over, since Mr. Britt's temper was of the worst in cases of this kind. In fact, of late Mr. Phillipse had recognized the signs that tell a man of the world in his position that Mr. Britt was making up his mind to have done with this friendship. Truly, a sad lookout on a sunny morning.

Mr. Phillipse's down-bent gaze told him he was wearing his own pajamas. He found in a closet his own traveling case.

"It's remarkable how I do things when I don't know I'm doing them," he admitted, "I must have gone home and packed. I hope I did not insult the janitor. Now, how in the world can I explain this to Bully? He'll never stand for it. And to follow him to his aunt's! Oh, Lord! Tight as he is he's better than nothing, and I had to go and give him this chance to can

me. And follow him to his aunt's, too!"

Suddenly a vision of the frozen person and frosted hair of the aunt of Mr. Bullard Britt rose ghost-like before him.

One of those little big fears, which we know cannot possibly have any cause for existence and which in ghastly fashion refuse to expire, rose in him at the mental vision of the stately Mrs. Maturin Skinner.

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Phillipse with conviction as he started for his bath.

"Nonsense!" he repeated with even more conviction as he left the bathroom and found the long grey hair where he had thrown it, on the windowsill.

"Nonsense!" he cried with violence as he looked upon that token of the past night.

But, nevertheless, he shuddered.

Someone lightly tapped at the door.

Thinking that, possibly, the old customs of Funston Hall called for a succession of morning juleps, Mr. Phillipse hastened to the portal.

"Good morning, sir," said Mr. Britt's own man, "Mr. Britt says he will be pleased to see you after he has had his breakfast. He's having it now, sir. I think in about half an hour, sir."

"Livers," Mr. Phillipse was, from necessity, on the best terms with the valet; their service of the spoiled, evil-tempered, fat youth made them allies, "how is he this morning?"

"Very bad, Mr. Phillipse, sir, after your message. I gave it to him this morning. He came home late from the dance at the Springs, sir, and so I thought it better to wait until this morning."

So he had sent Bully Britt a message! Now, if possible, to find out what it was.

"Well—well, so he takes it that way, does he, Livers?"

"Yes, sir. He's very, if I might say so, frightened, Mr. Phillipse."

"Of course, Livers. But still what could I do?"

"Exactly, sir. He's afraid to see

you, sir, and yet afraid not to—you know how he is at such times, sir."

"Livers," said Mr. Phillipse sternly, "I hope you told him exactly what I said. Livers, I believe you have made it worse than I intended."

"No, sir, begging your pardon, sir. I told him exactly what you told me to, sir—exactly. I told him that you were here. He was expecting you, of course, after your telegram of the morning."

"My telegram of the morning? Oh, yes! Very well."

"I will say that he was very angry, sir, but when I told him that you told me that your coming was imperative; that it was so important that you could do nothing else but come, and that if he did not see you and listen to what you had to tell him you would not answer for the consequences to himself, he stopped being angry, and, if I may say so, sir, he is now very much frightened, sir. You see, I told him nothing more than you told me, sir."

"Very well, Livers."

"Mr. Phillipse, sir."

"Yes, Livers."

"Might I, as it were, break it to him a little, sir? Is it Miss Lillian or Miss Mabel? And will it be in the morning papers? They come at noon here, you know, sir."

The three mint juleps made a clarion call upon the forebears of Mr. Phillipse and caused them to show in the final manner in which he said, much as the Lord President might have spoken to the groom porter of Charles the Second: "Livers, you may go!"

VI

WHEN he was alone, Mr. Phillipse and the three mint juleps proceeded to consider the situation. It had all the merciless simplicity of the old Mosaic law of crime and punishment. Briefly, he had come into the country and had frightened to death his sole and only source of income in its aunt's house. He must, within half an hour, discover what important and horrible secret he

could impart to the fat one that would justify his own presence.

The matter of the kiss must wait. Finance should always come before kisses. Yet, somehow, the thought of that gray hair would not down. Like a thin gray ghost it threaded the corridors of his mind. He knew that what he feared was quite impossible. He had not kissed Mrs. Maturin Skinner. He knew it! Yet, if he had done so (he hadn't, of course) but if he had, the sooner he forever resigned all hopes of Mr. Bullard Britt's friendship, and gave over the useless task of thinking up some horrible thing to impart to him, the better. In any case Funston Hall was not far from the Springs where his wife was at work. Lydia was always a sport, and, if the worst came, he could go over and talk divorce with her and borrow the money to get back to his creditors.

Yes, it was a hopeless morning for Mr. Phillipse.

The three mint juleps, combined with what other liquids must have preceded them, began to give him a hazy, impersonal sense of doom, in which he walked mournfully without much responsibility for what he might do or say. Visions of his past rose to mourn with him. He had married Lydia at twenty-seven; both had hoped that somebody would die so that they might live; nobody had died, or if they had the tender young couple had not benefitted by the demise. At last they had both been forced to go back to work. The life of being a friend to the friendless rich is very hard; very ill paid. Yes, Lydia was right in thinking of getting a divorce.

Mr. Phillipse shed a tear. Of all the women he loved, he was sure he loved none of them as much as Lydia. But then he had seen so little of his wife; so much of other women. What in the name of time was he to tell Bully?

The breakfast tray brought by a smart young butler (the egg-headed Ethiopian, being a suddenly acquired old family servant, would have nothing to do with breakfast trays) failed to

seduce Mr. Phillipse from his intention of getting a little more air and light on his problem.

On leaving his bedroom he found himself on a gallery overlooking a wide hall lined with family portraits (quite remarkable, isn't it, how old portraits have the habit of making themselves at home and instantly joining the family?) and filled with morning sun which flooded in through a wide doorway. Through that doorway he glimpsed the lower portions of some fat, white pillars twined with honeysuckle. In the vivid sunlight beyond the porch a groom was holding a saddled hackney. Directly below Mr. Phillipse, her habit-clad back to him, stood a lady engaged in buttoning her gauntlets.

Her back was familiar.

Apparently the question of the kiss was answered.

The lady about to take her morning ride was Mrs. Wenton.

There was nothing astonishing or suggestive of the long arm of coincidence in the presence of Mrs. Wenton. She generally managed to get herself invited to, or propose herself for the house parties that included Mr. Bullard Britt.

Standing above her, gazing down upon her riding hat, Mr. Phillipse gave way to what the Middle Ages would have accurately described as "making dolor and moan." "Oh lord, it's all on again!" he murmured in piteous tones, "It's all on again!"

However, being a gentleman resigned to his doom, he put on the face of glad eagerness, most probably acceptable to Mrs. Wenton, and hastened down the staircase.

"Blanche," he cried in the tones of the thoroughly happy.

Blanche Wenton started and turned to him, not the maddeningly possessive face that he had looked for, but one in which surprise and annoyance, and some further thing not to be analyzed instantly by a gentleman who had had three mint juleps and no breakfast, was depicted.

"What in the world are you doing here? Bully said he told you not to come," said the erstwhile platonic friend. Her tone was new. Formerly she had spoken to him as one speaks to a slave, but now, and no friend of the rich could mistake the tone, she spoke to a servant. And she had only five thousand a year. It was very perplexing.

"What do you mean by disturbing him?" demanded Mrs. Wenton.

"Blanche," Mr. Phillipse felt that to repeat her name would not commit him too much, "Blanche."

"If you think," she glanced about her and then lowered her voice to a steely whisper, "if you think you can make any trouble, let me enlighten you. I have been to your rooms."

"Hush, Blanche!"

"Thank you. I'm sufficiently hushed for all practical purposes. I found all my letters—all, do you understand? Every one. How could you leave them around the way you do? I always knew you were careless."

"I've been out of town, Blanche. Have you been writing to me?"

"I have. I wanted you to return my letters. But you needn't bother, because I found them all. I left the key on your table."

Mr. Phillipse understood. She had been breaking off. (How thoughtless not to open her letters.) The use she had made of her purely platonic latchkey showed that she had made certain that all was ended. And in further proof of that joyful fact he saw that her hair was bobbed, after the fashion of Mrs. Vernon Castle, and of a new bright wrinkle.

That long, grey hair could never have come from that young head.

"Blanche," he cried in sorrowful reproach.

"Hush!" she commanded. Then her voice changed from hardest bronze to softest silver as she said, "Why, Mrs. Skinner, what a lovely morning you have provided us."

VII

MR. PHILLIPSE turned to see what might have been Catherine de Medici in one of her most poisonous moods and a short skirt descending the stairs. Gray, ample, ominous and frigidly terrible the aunt of Mr. Bullard Britt advanced upon him.

He broke into a light perspiration.

"Wonderfully pure the air, this morning," said Mrs. Wenton, picking up her crop from a table.

"I do not find it is pure as usual," said the deep-toned voice of the aunt of Mr. Bullard Britt.

Mr. Phillipse's perspiration grew heavier.

"Don't you?" laughed Mrs. Wenton. "I think, after all, there is a threat of a thunder storm, so I must get my ride, If I am going to." She nodded, swung down the hall, out of the house and into the saddle. The sound of hoofs on the gravel died away leaving an awful silence—the silence as of judgment day.

Mr. Phillipse waited for Mrs. Maturin Skinner to look at him. His eyes held the piteous apprehension of those of a freshman who wakes to find his bed surrounded by sophomores.

At last the aunt of Mr. Bullard Britt removed her gaze from the doorway that no longer held the person of Mrs. Wenton. She looked upon Mr. Phillipse.

"Peter," said the aunt of Mr. Bullard Britt.

To his horror he saw that her face was breaking into a tender smile. The effect of such a phenomenon upon that iron countenance and upon him was truly terrible.

"Oh, my Lord! I did kiss her! And, Heaven deliver me, she takes it like this!" he inwardly gasped.

"Peter."

Mr. Phillipse was a gentleman, and for a gentleman there is no other course but to fit the face of the day to the action of the night. Since he had kissed her, and she took it that way,

there was nothing for him to do but take it the way she did. Besides he could not offend Mr. Britt's aunt. Assuming an expression of deep tenderness overlaid with soft joy, he took her hand and squeezed it.

"Maggie," he breathed.

Mrs. Maturin Skinner removed her hand; stiffened through all her ample opportunities for stiffening; lost the consciousness of Mr. Phillipse, but not of the outrage that had been put upon her; turned, and, in the course of time, vanished.

He smote his brow; his sense of doom increased, and with it the realization that it was hopeless to battle with life.

"Then I did not kiss her. Who in the devil did I kiss?" said Mr. Phillipse.

"Beg pardon, sir, Mr. Britt will see you now," said the valet, who, unnoticed, had come up behind Mr. Phillipse.

Mr. Phillipse stared at the menial. Precious time that should have been spent in thinking of something horrible to impart to the trembling and venomous Mr. Britt had been wasted in insulting his patron's aunt. Of what use to think of anything? Of what use to do anything but pack and send for some vehicle to get him to the Springs, and there to part from Lydia forever and borrow enough to get him back to his troubles?

"Beg pardon, sir, but don't keep Mr. Britt waiting, sir," said his ally.

Hope dies hard in any man that has had three mint juleps.

"I'll be there directly," said Mr. Phillipse haughtily.

The valet vanished upwards towards where the fat youth, in a venomous funk, shivered in his bed.

Mr. Phillipse rested his heavy head upon his collar bone. All was over.

He did not even hear the car that slid up to the porch, or see the small, brisk figure, with ash blond hair, and pleasingly competent face that entered the hall.

"Peter."

Now he saw it and gave a mournful cry.

"Lydia."

"Sorry I couldn't stay last night, Pete," said the small person. "I just had to run over to see to the Tollers' dance. How are you this morning?"

"Lydia," he said slowly and hazily, "how should I be? Oh Lydia."

She gazed upon him.

"Then you did not understand?" she demanded.

"Lydia."

"But Pete, if I were still determined on a divorce would I have let you kiss me—like that?"

"Lydia!"

"By cracky, Pete!" the small person gave a chuckle, "you can't come it over me. I believe you're still drunk."

"Lydia!"

"Never mind. You are always charming that way. Now, listen! When Mrs. Skinner 'phoned me you were coming, I ran over for a minute. I wanted to see if you had changed. When I found you hadn't I just was so glad. Mrs. Skinner has been urging me not to get a divorce, she doesn't believe in it. She is a good old girl—been no end of help to me with pushing the Tollers. I've talked with her about you so much that she's really become very fond of you; told me she feels like a mother to us. I told her if you hadn't changed I wouldn't. Well, I had only a minute with you when you came in, and I'll admit, Pete, you were charming. How did you think of just the right thing to say when you kissed me?"

"Lydia."

"Yes— If you hadn't referred to our marriage that way, I might have held out. When you said '27 I, I nearly cried. You were twenty-seven, Pete. I always think of you as twenty-seven. Yes, Pete, I'm not going to get a divorce. I can afford you, now, for a year anyway. Papa Toller gave me ten thousand for my work. Perhaps we can do better if we work together. Anyway, we needn't make any plans for a year. After that, if we have to get divorced, well, we'll have to. Come on back to the Springs with me. Bully doesn't want you here. Blanche is going to make him break with all his old friends."

"How's that?"

"Didn't you know? She's hooked him."

Mr. Phillipse advanced and took the small person in his arms: "Lydia!"

"What in the devil are you doing? Why in the devil don't you come when I send for you! What in the devil do you mean by keeping me waiting? Why in the devil did you come here anyway?" bawled a furious voice from the gallery.

Mr. Phillipse turned to behold the fat Mr. Bullard Britt wrapped in a purple silk dressing gown, and a most scarlet rage.

Lightly he crossed the hall; blithely he mounted the steps, until his handsome and youthful face was within three inches of the round moon that some journey apprentice at making humans had bestowed upon Mr. Bullard Britt.

"I came all the way to Virginia to tell you to go to Hell," said Mr. Phillips.



NO woman is ever original enough to have different sets of endearing phrases for different men.



MY LOVE

By Edward Arthur Beder

MY love is as dear to me as a change of underwear in August. Her eyes are like twin aces of diamonds, bright and merry, and when I am near her they glisten like the oil in the bottom of a sardine tin. Her nose reminds me of a candle—its waxen whiteness fascinates me. Her caress is as soft as the touch of a well-trained barber adjusting the preliminary cloth. Soft-spoken is my love, her voice as soothing as the hiss of an escape of gas. Her hair is long and thick, like a thousand tan shoelaces bunched tightly together, and her soul is as pure and unsullied as the unspeckled surface of a brand new flypaper.



A SONG OF A SOUTHERN ISLAND

By John Hanlon

VAGUE, misty hills against a pastel sky,
Rippling, turquoise waves,
Whispering to one another;
Tiny, white-gabled homes,
Slumbering under green foliage;
Would that here I might rest,
And find peace from the toils of my journey!

Alas! my pathway lies far to the southward.
My quest has just begun.
O God, will it e'er have an ending?
I seek a haunting face,
And a voice that is wistfully calling.
Little white homes, farewell!
My path lies far to the southward.



WHEN a woman shows her jealousy, she has lost the man a long time before.

SHOULD A PRETTY WOMAN EAT?

By Frank Pease

HOW much more successful, how fancifully finished they would be, these little women, these pretty little women, if they did not eat! No pretty woman should eat. Women, those fat, chaste and agile *fish-frauen* of Degas, yes, but not a Fragonard, not a Greuze, not a Tanagra Girl. For Art, improving upon nature, forbids it. It is bad taste: says Art. It is primitive, morbid, democratic; besides, it spoils their profiles.

The Feeding-Hour at Sherry's—what a shock to a delicate man! A pastel of silk and lace and velvet *pantoufles* floats dreamily in trailing a tenuous aura of perfume. The silks and laces settle themselves with a little shimmering *frou-frou*. From their silver vase the roses blush back at her, happy that she is to dine on their petals. Oh charming *tête-à-tête*!

Dine?—on petals?—stargleams?—dust of rainbows?—as we would like to fancy? Not she! Oysters, oysters rotund and globulous, *pottage* thick with cream, *turbot à la reine*, four little lamb's ribs, a *ragoût* with mushrooms—heavens, a *ragoût*!—patties, custards, syllabus, pasties, and all fed into a mouth sketched but for kissing!

Although to stoke a modern Muriel is enough to daunt even the courage of a Brillat-Savarin, it is not the quantity alone which shocks us: it is the horrid fact that she is, so to speak, stokable at all. Who, for instance, could gauge the shock all susceptible men are subjected to at least once in their lives? I mean that crash of pre-nuptial visionings when He discovers She has a bouncing bona fide appetite? Likes her steaks rare, her omelettes well-browned, and

just loves plain bread and butter. Ugh! The divinely lugubrious ecstasy of the past few months—or days—collapses to a wounded realism, and, by some painful association of ideas, he is reminded of his motor's yawning pétrol tank.

No: decidedly, a pretty woman should not eat. Her function is to broider the hem of life—or, if you prefer, the corsage, since it is closer the heart. A decorative arabesque, she should toil not: neither should she spin: neither should she eat. Her beauty should be that Truth which Keats declared is all we need to know. And that she does eat! Oh agony! Oh profound and secret pain! rarely confessed of men.

A great many students of Woman Unfinished have realized a pretty woman should not eat. Lord Byron could not bear the sight of it. De Maupassant was very curious to learn if his mysterious correspondent were a gourmande, but Marie Bashkirtseff was too subtle to tell. Witness the care of George Moore to drop the curtain on his *pétit souper* with the charming Doris at Orelay. No doubt he was quite as fastidious in selecting the menu as in choosing his own *robe de nuit*, but he is too much the artist to ravish our susceptibilities in showing the dear girl clinging to a chop or the leg of *une jeune poulette*.

And Beardsley? Can we imagine one of his slim exotic girls eating? Oh perish the thought! At the love-banquet the frockless companion of Abbé Fanfreluche ate, it is true, but asparagus only, and served by satyrs dressed in white satin. Then there is the terrible example of that woman who did

eat, and boasted of it: case of Mary MacLane-and-olive. Not gentle toying as befits a young and pretty woman, but a downright shocking appetite. With an aphrodisiac suggestion of tousling cats in verbenum, Mary overthrows and throttles the helpless olive, tears it limb from limb, devours it before our frightened eyes. And so vindictive! It might be a man she was eating! I confess to a normal timidity, but was not prepared that night after reading the "Story" for pursuit by troops of succubas and vampires as if I were a medieval churchman and the sport of a *conte drolatique*, nor for a Circe in sunbonnet crunching and crunching and—but I woke up in time, thank Heaven!

How the dilettantes in Oscar Wild's play hasten to eat all the cucumber sandwiches of which Lady Bracknel and Gwendolen are so fond. And why not? What worse torture for a dilettante than watching a pretty woman eat something of which she is very fond! They should have a care, these pretty little women, for Rabelais, who "drank no more than a sponge," also knew a great deal about comestibles and declared that "appetite comes with eating." Also a disenchanted mankind. Those Queens of the Niebelungs had the secret. They knew better than risk the Mystery in the rough and tumble of a Saxon banquet. Incidentally, perhaps this explains the mighty deeds of valour done in their name. For man is the only animal who battles for mysteries; all the others are realists. And the veil is rent once a pretty woman is caught—eating.

Alas! that the only pretty woman on earth, that Lady of the First Garden, should have lent the noxious custom such high prestige. Fair Helen had more taste. There is no record that she *ate* the Trojan *casus belli*. Looking to the banquets of olden day one feels that the Queen of Sheba could not have risked the winning of Solomon by mere eating. Is it to be supposed that Salomé wasted her thoughts upon the roasted peacocks and Syrian dainties

instead of the intricate steps of her new Herodian *tango*? Mayhaps Thaïs was a gourmande, but not at the Alexandrian banquet with Paphnutius. She knew better than to hazard the holy and particular man's disfavour by eating. It was a book and not a *banquette à deux* that undid Francesca da Rimini. "They read no more that day," says Dante. It was the story of Tristan and Iseult. Iseult's too was a love-potion and not a cocktail. The exquisitely tiny mouth of Beatrice Cenci was never made for food, rather nothing more than kisses. *En passant*, that smile of Mona Lisa's! For all we know she may have been like one of those dreamy-eyed Sonyas of Russian fiction who might be scanning an ultimate beatitude, but really are only thinking of the salad.

"Eating is not beautiful," says Strindberg, "and to watch one's darling store away food in her beautiful mouth, which ought to be speaking beautiful words, to smile bewitchingly, and to purse up her tender lips to a kind of flower bud which one inhales in a kiss—that may be downright wicked." It is true that to hide this unseemly function one accustoms oneself to light conversation and tries to forget what the beautiful mouth is occupied with—a sorry task, especially if it be at breakfast when only dull people are brilliant.

As with all the Great Problems there is, I suppose, only the remedy of compromise. But let it be sweet. If a pretty woman *will* eat, it should not be prosaic food. Let her like Ronsard command:

"Buy me no meat, but mellow
Apricots, melons yellow,
Cream and strawberries."

Perhaps, if she is very pretty, even as "the Ninon," she could become *ivré dés la soupe*.

Of course this inescapable dining—just enough to keep body and skirt together—she could slip in at the hour of coiffing, and then choosing only food to fit her complexion. Indeed, on second thought, given a *mise-en-scène* with her three favourite girls, Pappe-

larde, Blanchemains, and Loreyne, waiting immediately upon her with perfume and powder in delicate flacons and frail cassolettes, her three favourite boys, Claud, Clair, and Sarrasine, standing amorously about with salver, fan, and napkin, Millemant with a slight tray of slippers, Minette with some tender gloves, La Popelinière ready with a frock of yellow and yellow, La Zambinella with the jewels, Florizel

with some flowers, Amadour with a box of various pins, Vadius with a box of sweets, an incomparable Mrs. Marsuple with intimate chidings, and her doves to frôler her ankles with their plumes—granted such accompaniments it might be permissible for a pretty woman to slightly taste *queues d'agneau clair de lune*. In such sweet privacy could we even object if, like Louis XV and the du Barry, all the food be not eaten?



A HEAVENLY DESIRE

By James Shannon

I AM tired of heaven; bored with the endless monotony of being perfectly happy; sick of the religious folk—good people in their way but awfully tiresome—that lounge around this place with fatuous smiles of contentment on their pale faces. I wish I were in hell. I want to fry flap-jacks on the flaming flag-stones, and to eat them with syrup distilled from the lovely bodies of the Venuses and Cleopatras that have gone before. I want to be able to chew tobacco without the everlasting fear that I will stain streets of gold when I expectorate. I want to shoot craps with Napoleon, Marc Antony, and the Benicia Kid, with Helen of Troy to pull the beer-taps and Poppaea to lug the steins to the thirsty players. I want to sing "Scotland's Burning" with Bobby Burns, and "It'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night" with a little broiler I used to know in Chicago. But paramount to these pleasures as an inducing cause to my strange desire is my extreme repugnance to wearing a heavy gold crown on a warm summer's day in heaven, packing around a lyre, and singing "O! the Home Over There, Over There!"



CHAGRIN:—Your emotion when you watch a woman climb on top of a Fifth Avenue bus, and discover the woman is your wife.



THREE are three kinds of women:—Those you could love, those you could not love, and those you have met.



IT is not difficult to talk to a woman. You have only to say you love her, with elaborations.

THE POOR SIMP

By Hayden Jameson

THE storm of her vituperation grew in splendor. Contempt curled the lips that formed her scoriac condemnation. Scorn blazed in the eyes which beheld his face, a confession of his many sins. Her tone was nicely attuned to cruelty, and her vocabulary took knowledge of nothing but contumely and reviling.

She was a valiant woman; she feared nothing—because she knew that he neither had the words to retort in kind nor felt the impulse to hurt her physically. On such a foundation, her self-confidence had reared itself into a rampart from which she threw down upon him the javelins of her wrath.

The protestations he had tried to begin no longer surged to his lips. Only, the blood left his face, and his fingers—as they do in all emotional novels—quivered and writhed.

He was, in every particular, the perfect picture of a loving man castigated, denounced and contemned by the beloved woman. The bonds of unspeak-

able tenderness, with which he had tried to bind her to him, she had converted into knouts wherewith he was scourged. The beautiful Castle of Consideration, in which he had sought to house her, she had transformed into a dungeon for the incarceration of his stupid soul.

In other words, he was a poor simp.

Subconsciously at first, and very consciously at last, she had realized that he was a poor simp. And now he began to suspect it himself. It occurred to him that it might be better for him to withdraw temporarily from her presence. He did so, taking his hat from the rack with a furtive jerk and darting through the door without a backward look.

After he had gone, she flung herself, sprawling, into a chair and laughed sardonically. He would come back—the poor simp.

That night he did not come—and the next—and the next.

He never did come back.



VIGNETTE

By Alfred Forgy

YOU have a presentiment that the last car has gone. Dry-lipped, longing for a smoke, you sit with a cramp in your right arm wondering how to get out of this mess. She softly murmurs, "A penny for your thoughts."



TILLSON (DOROTHY)—REFERENCE SECTION

By J. E. Middleton

BECAUSE of the universal passion for dinner a monastic quietude broods over a Public Library between the wild whistling of six o'clock and the timid chiming of seven. Miss Tillson as a ripe librarian selected that hour for assailing the six daily papers and pasting the clippings in classified scrap-books. Classification and system made her all in all. Life to her was an infinity of pigeon holes. Each experience, common or special, she placed under the perpetual surveillance of index, cross-index and card catalogue. Thus she had been trained.

System in its modern meaning had found Miss Tillson a zealous pupil. Her natural love of order, her pleasure in neatness, were thus enlarged and glorified. In her address before the Library Association on "Cataloguing as an Art," she had drawn a parallel between the pure beauty of musical form as shown in phrase, episode, development, and the pure beauty of studied order. She had urged that cataloguing was not a mere utilitarian device. To find books was essentially a lower, meaner motive than to appreciate the perfected method of finding them. A card-index, she held, had the flowing grace, the eternal charm of a Gothic ogee curve.

It is not surprising that Miss Tillson had acquired during her forty years an aspect of dryness. A suggestion of severity appeared in the chill sparkle of her glasses and in the trim management of her hair. John, the caretaker, might argue with the assistants, Miss Ellarby and Miss Albright. Si-

lent obedience was his habit in the presence of Miss Tillson.

Usually John went to supper at six o'clock. To-night he was detailed to lay new linoleum about the exchange counter while The Public was absent. Miss Tillson had devised the plan, which, in its way, was a performance as intellectually dextrous as that of the engineer who renews a railway bridge between trains. By half past six the work was done. Save for the pronounced odor of the floor covering, none could tell that a revolution had been accomplished.

"Is that all, Miss Tillson?" John inquired; not without subtlety, for Mrs. John disliked a six o'clock wait.

The librarian looked up suddenly from a scrapbook of 1902 and became aware of the linoleum. "Is there any way," she said, closing her eyes for an instant, "of mitigating that odor?"

"Ma'am?" was the questioning response.

"The—smell of the oilcloth,—can we get rid of it? Perhaps if the windows were opened—"

"It would do no good, ma'am. You would only chill the place. What oilcloth wants is heat. 'Tain't a bad smell anyway."

"Very well," returned Miss Tillson. "Thank you, John. Good evening."

John's "Good night, ma'am" was simultaneous with his disappearance in the direction of the back door. His merciful deliverer returned to her clippings.

The happy desertion of the place brought a touch of faint beatitude up-

on the deliverer's soul. She looked about, at the soft green walls, at the mellow, frosted light bowls, at the chromatic mass of friendly books—arranged on the Open Shelf System, as modernity decrees. It was a high privilege to sit daily in this Parliament of Notables. Miss Tillson knew it and wondered for a brief moment if Heaven could be any more satisfying.

She began to picture the sort of Public Library which would serve the need of saints and angels. There would be no fiction, of course! The likes and dislikes of some undisciplined youth or foolish maiden had no witchery for Miss Tillson. She had always marvelled at the public appetite for Romance, and had set it down as an earthy desire for mere entertainment. Heaven, she felt, would clamor for poetry, biography, drama, metaphysics. But this was unprofitable speculation—almost heresy! The librarian blushed. While she was still displaying the rosy charm of semi-confusion, Dr. Higginson appeared.

Round glasses, gold rimmed, aided the Higginson eyes. They were of dull blue, and had the faraway look which sustained lecturing in Old Testament Exegesis imparts. The Higginson manner was gentle, and the Higginson reputation was international. More, this was Miss Tillson's Pastor and friend. He had confided to her the scope of his great work, "The Message of the Minor Prophets." Her exact knowledge of books had been serviceable to him many times, and she forgave his unpolished shoes, and his neglected linen.

Miss Tillson apologized for the linoleum. Dr. Higginson smiled. "The vines and the tender grape give a good smell," he replied. The rest of the quotation he suppressed, for suddenly he had realized a savage and terrible fact—that it is not good for man to be alone. A strain of sacerdotalism caused Dr. Higginson when a young man to neglect the Collegiate duty of falling in love once a month. His Curate days were spent in Canadian lumbering camps. When named a Rec-

tor his studies had begun, and now as a Venerable Archdeacon—not offensively Venerable—he stood unmated and ashamed.

To-day, suddenly inspired, he saw in Miss Tillson's dryness only the manner of erudition. Her countenance was pleasant. Her eyes were undeniably handsome. She was mature in mind, gracious in conversion, altogether desirable. Dr. Higginson's thought was voicing the Song of Songs, "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

"It keeps rather cold," said Miss Tillson with the familiar smile of a parishioner.

"Yes, yes," was the musing reply, "but spring is almost at hand."

The librarian looked at the big window where driving snow was banking on the panes and laughed with less restraint than was her custom. A public official can afford to be unconventional between six and seven o'clock.

"It seems," she said wistfully, "as if Spring were months away."

Dr. Higginson's reputation for rapid thought and decisive action is high throughout the Diocese. As he received his cards, properly stamped, he looked steadily across the counter and said: "Miss Tillson, will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?"

Columns of fine print would not suffice to record the thoughts of the librarian during the next five seconds. Under violent stimulation human brain cells may go into mad paroxysms of activity.

"I mean it," said the Doctor while waiting for a reply.

Miss Tillson was not original in thought. Heedless of the hackneyed nature of the expression she actually said "It's rather sudden!" Dr. Higginson concurred.

"I could not say, to-night," the librarian continued with trembling voice. "The question IS serious, don't you think?"

The Doctor coughed with some solemnity. "Shall I come in, say, ah, on Tuesday at the same hour?"

Miss Tillson bowed.

"Four days," he added. "Will the time be sufficient?"

Miss Tillson bowed again.

"I ask your pardon," continued the Doctor in a more intimate tone, "for not, as it were, leading up to the subject. I feel I should not have omitted the exordium." He took her hand, and with natural gallantry, stiff though tender, bent over it. Indeed he almost kissed it. The effect was as if he had done so, for the cheeks of the librarian showed a reasonable, just and spinsterly coloring.

The Doctor was gone. Before Miss Tillson could decide whether to laugh or cry, the vanguard of the Inquiring Public came; a white-whiskered citizen, ruminating on a quill toothpick. For three hours business was brisk. Save for an occasional half-smile or a sudden frown as cards were stamped and books examined, Miss Tillson gave no sign that the foundations of the earth were breaking up. To John before closing she was as firm as ever. She did not forget to mention the linoleum odor.

"It'll be all right in the mornin', ma'am," he assured her. "You won't get a sniff of it."

"I have had many—'sniffs' of it this evening," she answered, with slight emphasis on the word. Her good night to the assistants was courteously calm.

Later in a formal sitting room, Miss Tillson lay on the green denim sofa and "cried" until her jangling nerves were numbed. Then at leisure she recalled the hurricane of thought which had burst upon her when the Doctor spoke. It had come under three heads, Past, Present and Future. She reviewed it in reverse order.

Future: a place in University Society, the companionship of a good man, an old age secure and beautiful. Present: release from drudgery, no more loneliness,—but on the other hand, the loss of a library well be-

loved and the waste and atrophy of a perfected cataloguing technique. In the main Future and Present indicated acceptance of this strange proposal.

Past was less encouraging. Past had occasioned the tears. Past brought to mind the gate in a white picket fence, when Miss Tillson was "Dolly." There in her decorous twenties she had said numberless *rallentando* Good Night's to a pleasant farmer boy. There was no definite word of love, only a gracious, serene understanding, each to each.

To-night the old hot pain returned, the fierce sorrow of South African war days. Somewhere on that sun-baked, pitiless veldt the good lad fell asleep. He had become to Miss Tillson an ideal, a royal memory. She felt no older at forty than at twenty-five. People rarely do. Yet, in place of a ruddy soldier, came a bald and *passé* theologian already known as "old Doctor Higginson." The blazing irony of it brought simultaneous laughter and tears.

Decidedly Past was unfavorable. Yet, should the fantasy of an unspoken love deny the arguments of Present and Future? Miss Tillson brought to bear on the problem her eminently practical mind. Resolutely putting behind her the tendency towards emotionalism into which she had been betrayed, she determined to await the fearful Tuesday in a spirit of sanity and mental equilibrium.

Duty and Inclination, harnessed tandem-wise, bore Miss Tillson to Church every Sunday. A new distaste for meeting Dr. Higginson's eyes caused her only momentary hesitation. Yet she heard the reading of the hymn with a nervous shiver. "Blest be the tie that binds!" had an application that seemed almost uncanny. She could not believe that the Doctor would devise the Service for purposes of flirtation, yet this weird appropriateness chilled her.

The sermon, cogent and powerful, she heard with impatience. At the benediction she hastened out, or would have hastened out if she had not been stopped in the vestibule. Here she was

forced to commune with Mrs. Minter and a few other members of the Ladies' Guild. Before she could free herself, the Pastor was before her. Frankly, without embarrassment, without affectation, he shook hands with his Lucasta. He seemed almost hypocritical in his manner. One who did not know the truth might have thought him indifferent. "I believe I have an appointment with you on Tuesday," was his only remark. It was enough to send the librarian home uneasy.

Wooing of any kind was a novelty to Miss Tillson. She therefore had devised no Standard Chart of Efficiency. She did not know whether the Doctor's method was scientific or casual. Consideration brought no help. She thought, and thought until her head ached. On Sunday evening she glanced at several love tales of the better sort, but cast them aside with a sigh. There was no end of description about the college lad of 22, or the polished bachelor of 40. No writer of fiction seemed to consider even the possibility of a bald lover with circular spectacles and dusty boots. Miss Tillson wondered if Literature was really Life seen through a Temperament.

Should she with a quiet mind enter "the estate ordained of God in the time of man's innocence?" Could she withstand the competition in Dr. Higginson's affection of a round dozen of Minor Prophets? If, setting her hand to the plow, she might desire to turn back, what then? As a woman of System, she compiled a Trial Balance of advantages and disadvantages. Plainly, the answer must be Yes.

She was no longer troubled about the picket fence dream. "Mere sentiment," she told herself, "—probably induced by nervousness." Yet she was slightly disturbed by one question which clamored for a direct answer. Did she love Dr. Higginson? She respected him, admired him, revered him. What more than this was love? Perhaps youth found more—a passion for possession, a longing for eternal ownership. Was it wise to look for "feeling"

of this sort after 40? The tumultuous charm of the crisis diverted Miss Tillson's mind from Monday's work, and she neglected to collect a fine of sixteen days' overtime at 3 cents a day.

Tuesday and determination came together. Whatever risks might be encountered Miss Tillson was prepared to meet. Already she had half decided that a quiet wedding in a travelling suit would be most desirable. She would have no attendants. She had no maiden friends of her own age save Miss Trethewey of the Brock Avenue Branch, and that virgin was inclined towards unprofitable and ceaseless talk. Asking Miss Trethewey to be bridesmaid would be equivalent to printing the engagement notice in *The Library Bulletin*. It would entail presentations, partings, and other tear-bedecked occasions. No. Miss Tillson would go to the Altar alone, carrying pink roses—or, rather, carnations. She hardly admitted to herself that she remembered a pink rose bush by a white picket fence. Yet she remembered—in time to decide upon carnations.

Her trousseau? She smiled to catch herself repeating an ancient rhyme forgotten for years. "Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue." To be frank, the librarian was thinking of blue—garters, when the door swung open and Dr. Higginson came in. It was only three in the afternoon. Such is the lover's haste, God bless it!

Yet how indiscreet! Here were Miss Ellarby and Miss Albright! Here was John, winding the clock. Here were Mrs. Minter and much people in the Reading Room! The Doctor came slowly to the counter. Miss Tillson stood firm, her brain a very riot of speculation. For one hilarious moment she thought of herself as an Early Christian and Dr. Higginson as the lion.

He was the mildest of lions. He did not roar. He merely said, "How do you do?" He wore the ghost of a smile that had visited his face earlier in the day.

"I am quite well thank you, Doctor,"

responded Miss Tillson, the chill sparkle of her glasses warming up a trifle and a touch of pink appearing in her cheeks.

"Ah—charming weather," said the Doctor absently.

"Beautiful," replied the librarian. She was puzzled. The Doctor's face bore a strange expression—behind the ghostly smile. Two wrinkles in his forehead showed more plainly than usual.

"Ah, Boggs' 'Bibliography of Amos, Hosea and Malachi' is obtainable here, I hope?"

Miss Tillson cleared her throat. "Yes, Dr. Higginson," she replied.

"Now that is most satisfactory," responded the eager swain. "My own copy has been mislaid and I am lost, positively lost without it."

Miss Tillson opened a new mental pigeon hole to accommodate this odd and alarming experience.

"I have no doubt," the Doctor continued, "that you could procure the book for me?"

The librarian unlocked the catch of the oaken gate separating her from the Public, and preceded the clergyman to Shelf 14 AA, a quiet corner in the Reference Section.

"It is against the Rules for you to take this book out of the building," she said calmly.

"Oh dear me," returned the Doctor in dismay. "That is a lamentable circumstance."

Miss Tillson responded quickly: "Take it. I will be responsible for you." She noticed that the answer might express a sense of proprietorship, and bit her lip. "I mean," she said, "we can trust you to return it."

"Indeed, Miss Tillson," returned the Doctor, "I appreciate most highly the concession and I shall study to be worthy. Boggs is indispensable to my work." So does the stilted manner of the pulpit become colloquial. Filled with satisfaction, Dr. Higginson almost hugged the book, but he looked at Miss Tillson with no glimmer of understand-

ing. There was no train of associations from the action of hugging.

"Bless the man," thought Miss Tillson, "he has forgotten me!" Walking towards the counter, she turned. "I suppose," she said casually, "that you will be at work to-night."

"Until midnight," the Doctor responded. "I have no engagements this evening—at least none that I can recollect, so I shall not be interrupted. Good afternoon, good afternoon!" He was gone.

There is a calm fury more terrible than tempests of anger. For some moments it gripped every nerve in the librarian's spare body. Speech would have been a relief, but the lava of sustained comment was pent up. She could not express herself to the assistants or to the patrons. Her sense of humor kindled at the notion of telling John. Anyway perhaps she was too certain of her flouting, too sure of Dr. Higginson's sublime neglect. The dinner hour would bring the proof. The lamp of opportunity for this excessively Minor Prophet would not go out until seven o'clock.

In cheerful anticipation Miss Tillson heard the six o'clock whistles and saw the last of the Reading Room crowd drift away. Again she was at her clipplings. But she did not work too steadily. She listened, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Thus she languidly shuffled amongst the cards of her scrap-book catalogue.

"South African War. Anecdotes. S. B. Vol. 14, 1902," seized her attention. She found the book and re-read an entry well-known and well-beloved. "A Canadian patrol was cut off and there was a sharp fight. With all his comrades killed or disabled, Lieut. Moreland lay behind a rock maintaining a steady fire. He was using a wounded sergeant's rifle. Reaching for the bandolier, he was exposed for a moment and a bullet pierced his lung. Finding his strength waning he fired the last clip of cartridges and then broke the rifle across the rock. 'I'm

done, sergeant,' he said. 'But I don't mind dying, if—if the Maple Leaf can live!'"

Miss Tillson closed her eyes. Past spoke eloquently to her heart. Past sang of youth and a hero. All the mellow sweetness of Romance was in his tender voice. Present and Future looked so mean and small, so unimportant and sordid, that they could not stand to argue. As seven o'clock struck the librarian had link'd hands with Past and was looking through her tears at a garden gate where a rose-bush blossomed everlastingly.

On Wednesday morning was heard the blare of a taxi-cab. Into the Library came Dr. Higginson eager and distraught. "Miss Tillson, my dear Miss Tillson," he said brokenly and in low tones. "I have no excuse, none save my unhappy absorption in study. May I still ask you to consider favorably my—my request?" He saw his answer, though the lady spoke no word. The great man sighed even as a boy might have done.

"How did you remember me this morning?" said Miss Tillscon, with a note of sympathy in her tone.

The pulpit manner seemed ludicrous in contrast with his trembling lips. "I was in a mercantile establishment," he replied. "When I had finished my business, I moved towards the elevators. Just as I passed the Linoleum Department, my wretched memory seemed to get some extraordinary stimulus. I cannot explain it. One can rarely account for psychological phenomena. Ah—it is useless?"

Miss Tillson bowed. "I am sorry," she said, glancing at the studious assistants, unconscious in the very presence of calamity.

Then did the gallant Dr. Higginson put on his hat and bravely smile as he quoted from the Prophet Micah: "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first ripe fruit."

And Miss Trethewey never knew.



SEX OBLIGATION

By Strickland Gillilan

WERE I a woman I should cry—
'For lo, my love is cold to me.
She is no longer sweetly shy,
But brazen, snippy, bold to me.

But I'm a he, and I must swear,
Get spiffed and say "Wot t'ell d' I care?"

Were I a she I'd blub a lot
And make folks pity me, perhaps.
For She has shown me I am not
Ace-high to several other chaps.

But I'm a stag, and I must bluff
And pull that world-old don't-care stuff.



THE PURITAN

By Owen Hatteras

§ 1.

THE main service of the Puritan to practical religion is to be found in the fact that he saved the sport of heretic-hunting at a time when the rising tide of enlightenment threatened it. That rescue was effected by the simple device of changing the old crime against revealed doctrine into a crime against revealed ethics. Awakened by the Reformation and the Renaissance, the men of Northern Europe were beginning to take all pretensions to doctrinal infallibility very lightly, and so they revolted against the Inquisition. But they were still ready to grant that, in matters of conduct, there were absolute and immovable standards, and the Puritan very deftly turned this willingness to his uses. Instead of ferreting out and burning heretics for questioning the pope or the Trinity, he ferreted them out and did execution upon them for living in adultery, or for wearing gay clothes, or for affronting the Lord God with fiddle music, or for breaking the Sabbath. This innovation showed that he had a profound understanding of the popular mind, for it was based upon two sound assumptions as to the workings of that mind, the first being that the great masses of men are always convinced that right and wrong are absolute values, even after they have been induced to change those values by appeals to their emotion, and the second being that the great masses of men delight in barbarous punishments, and are always eager to join in the pursuit and destruction of offenders.

§ 2.

Puritanism and democracy are thus brothers, for both capitalize the mob-man's hatred of the individualist, and particularly of the individualist who is obviously having a better time in the world—*e.g.*, the millionaire, the wine-bibber, the king, the adulterer. This explains why it is that Puritanism has been most prosperous in democratic countries. In these countries the whole political theory of the people is based on the axiom that whatever the masses of undifferentiated and unsuccessful men think, desire and have to put up with is more creditable to the men themselves and more pleasing to a just God than what the minority of distinguished and successful men think, desire and are able to get. The ethical ideas at the bottom of Puritanism, like the ideas at the bottom of the Beatitudes, represent no more and no less than an effort to make a virtue of necessity. True enough, the mob-man, by his own enterprise, is quite incapable of erecting this assumption of superiority to his betters into a coherent ethical system, and doubly incapable of forcing it upon them. But there are always resourceful and competent men who, in return for public honor and profit, are willing to turn against their class to serve him and lead him. Of such are all the great company of mob-masters, clerical and lay. These mob-masters exploit the envy of the mob in their own interest. They become eminent lawmakers, heretic-hunters, evangelists, scandal-mongers, reformers, heads of the state. They descend into demo-

cratic history as saviors of the common people and enemies of sin in high places. They constitute, while alive, the Puritan hierarchy.

§ 3.

The true Puritan always tries to make the world believe (and not infrequently he undoubtedly believes it himself) that his rigorous rules for the conduct of the non-Puritan are altruistic—that he seeks the other fellow's advantage against the latter's will. This is the excuse commonly offered for prohibition, vice-crusading, the laws against horse-racing, and so on. The pretension, of course, is false, even when made honestly. The Puritan would not actually like it if the other fellow were saved, either here or in some theoretical hereafter. His joy in his own peculiar virtue, indeed, lies precisely in the feeling that it gives him an advantage—that he himself, in return for his sacrifices of joy in this life, will be rewarded with illimitable joy in some future existence, whereas the other fellow will have to go to hell. Take away hell for the other fellow, and Puritanism would straightway lose most of its meaning, and what is more, most of its charm.

§ 4.

Moreover, the Puritan knows by experience that the sacrifices his ethical theory imposes upon him are hard to make, and so his successful achievement of them reinforces his feeling of superiority. The average man, he thinks, is not equal to them; they are the exclusive possession of a special class. Hence the Puritan venerates himself as an artist of unusual talents, a virtuoso of virtue. . . . His error consists in mistaking for a merit what is intrinsically rather a weakness. That is to say, his capacity for doing without is usually not so much a sign of strength as a sign of lack of originality, courage and enterprise. The truly strong man does not hesitate and re-

frain; he takes what he wants, and cheerfully pays the price. What keeps the Puritan faithful to his principles, nine times out of ten, is no more than a double-headed fear: first, of the consequences provided by his own system of morality, and secondly, of the probability that he would be unable to drag himself back, once he had stepped aside. The warmest advocate of prohibition that I know once confessed to me that he had a pathological thirst for whiskey, and that one drink would start him upon a debauch. One need be no very profound psychologist to see much the same fear in the Puritan howlers against what is called the double standard of morality. The trouble with these impassioned reformers is obviously temperamental. They are cursed with an extraordinary susceptibility to sex ideas and suggestions, and so they greatly exaggerate the susceptibility of others, and overestimate the importance of combating it. The Puritans who try to set up an extravagant censorship of art and literature suffer from the same disease. Here the inquiries of Dr. Sigmund Freud offer overwhelming support for what is a matter of common observation.

§ 5.

The truth about the Puritan is that, despite his superficial success at controlling his desires, he really has a good deal less power of inhibition than the average non-Puritan. The choice before him is not between abstinence and moderation, but between abstinence and excess. Recognizing his weakness, and greatly in fear of it, he attempts to conquer it by *force majeure*. He is in the condition of one who, fearing injury in a fight, incontinently assassinates his antagonist. Proceeding from the theory to the facts, we find that the Puritan, as encountered in the world, is almost always a poor stick of a man. His ethical theory is based frankly upon the needs and desires of eighth-rate men, and only eighth-rate men can get any genuine satisfaction

out of it. No man of the first rank ever was a Puritan. No Puritan ever wrote a poem worth reading, or a symphony worth hearing, or painted a picture worth looking at. The Puritan doctrine peoples hell with the greatest men of all time, from Shakespeare to Beethoven, and from Sophocles to Frederick the Great. Even in the department that the Puritan has sought to claim for his own—that of law-making—he has done only second and third-rate work. The only really valuable contributions to law that have been made in two thousand years—*e.g.*, Magna Charta, the American Constitution, the Code Napoleon, and Bismarck's so-called social legislation—have been the work of non-Puritans. In the United States, with Puritans in complete control of most of the law-making bodies, the legislation of the past half century has been marked by a progressive decay in intelligence and effectiveness.

§ 6.

In judging the inherent virtue of the Puritan it is important to remember that, even when he seems to shine with rectitude that shining may be no more than an appearance produced by his possession of the prerogative of defining the thing itself. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, at least, he has been in control of the law-making machinery for nearly three hundred years past, and during that time he has contrived to make crimes of most of the acts agreeable to the other fellow, while carefully allowing full legality to many of the acts most agreeable to himself. These valuations, I need not add, are disputed by non-Puritans. Not many of the latter, even when they obey the law, believe that it is intrinsically immoral to go fishing on the Sabbath, or, *per contra*, that it is intrinsically moral to play the spy and informer upon one's neighbors in the familiar Puritan manner. In themselves, indeed, many characteristic Puritan acts of faith and grace would seem to be far more dan-

gerous to civilized order and decency than the characteristic acts of such favorite butts of Puritan attack as gamblers, saloonkeepers and even prostitutes. If the Puritan laws prevailing in England and the United States were suddenly repealed and the code of any Continental country—*e.g.*, France, Germany, or even Russia—were enacted in their place, fully a half of the persons under indictment for misdemeanor would be liberated forthwith, and a good many popular reformers and examples-to-the-young, it is likely, would go to jail instead. In France, for example, it would be quite impossible for a group of pornographic old men to form a private organization for unearthing and pursuing prostitutes. The police would quickly suppress the club as subversive of public order.

§ 7.

The Puritan's obsession by concepts of legality and illegality is proof enough, of course, that he lacks aesthetic sense, for morality and beauty, despite much thoughtless gabble about moral beauty and the laws of art, are inherently antagonistic things. The phrase "moral beauty," indeed, is comprehensible only in a somewhat far-fetched figurative sense; read literally, it is meaningless. A thing cannot be both moral and beautiful, for the essence of beauty is enjoyment and the essence of morality is renunciation. As well speak of "self-sacrificing self-indulgence." There is, of course, such a thing as moral voluptuousness, and one observes it plainly in most Puritans, but no long exposition is needed to show that it is related to true beauty only as a song in rag-time is related to a symphony by Brahms. The Puritan reveals his moral voluptuousness, not in the rules of conduct he imposes upon himself, but in the rules of conduct he imposes upon the other fellow. In this business, it may be said with some plausibility, he plays, momentarily, the part of an artist, for the satisfaction he seeks is not so much that of having

refrained from something pleasant (an act of morality) as that of having achieved something pleasant, *i.e.*, the military conquest of the other fellow. But in general he seldom allows himself an indulgence in æsthetic feeling. Even in the case we have been considering his feeble æstheticism shows itself in the primitive form of cruelty, an element not lacking, true enough, in the higher manifestations of the æsthetic spirit, for they all involve the satisfaction of the will to power by forcing recalcitrant agencies to submit to design, but still an element that is usually well concealed by other and more rarefied factors. The Puritan can never imagine beauty as a thing in itself, an end in itself. It must be, at the best, no more than a bedizement of morality. Even music, the purest form of beauty, he apprehends only as a sort of uproarious reinforcement of moral precepts—a rhythmic hammering, as it were, upon the consciousness.

§ 8.

Wherever the hand of Puritanism has fallen, there ugliness has spread like some foul pestilence. The original Puritans in England stripped the churches of all beautiful things, and the Puritan of to-day carries on the tradition. The altar that he rears to his harsh and glowering god is bare and unlovely; he houses it in a misshapen and hideous church; the ceremonial with which he serves it is austere and without imagination; the very garb of his priests and bishops suggests the Sunday gauds of so many plumbers and farmhands. The ancient office of the mass, so profound in its mysticism and so pervasive in beauty, he has degraded to the level of an ill-natured harangue, with music almost identical, in its violent rhythms and cheap sentimentality, to the tunes of a brothel. There is in his act of worship no effort to evoke the infinite mystery and majesty of the Most High, but only an effort to reduce the inscrutable

decrees and desires of the Most High to the facile logic of a pothouse. He is, in brief, a spiritual vandal as he is an æsthetic vandal, and his antagonism to that ineffable beauty which lies within the dreams and aspirations of man is scarcely less bitter than his antagonism to that outer beauty which lies before man's eye. He translates kismet into the terms of a police court. He turns the prophets of God into pettifogging lawyers. He reduces the unknowable to the not worth knowing.

§ 9.

Puritanism and democracy: twin facets of the same gem! Both set the opinion of the incompetent above the opinion of the competent; both war upon beauty as the chief of all the handmaidens of joy; both are attempts to cast a mystical glamour, an air of transcendental impeccability and grandeur, about the mob-man's envy and distrust of his betters; both afford appeasement to his will to power. When they come to die, they will die together, as they have lived and flourished together. When democracy, proceeding from excess to excess, reaches at last that king excess which will destroy it, Puritanism will be destroyed with it. Aristocracy, order and discipline, a sound vision of progress, the concept of life as a beautiful adventure and civilization as a work of art—these things are as incompatible with Puritanism as they are with democracy. The two must perish in their day as all other great delusions have perished. And once they have passed even the report of them will cease to have any gripping substance. The Puritan Sunday, in the time to come, will take on the unreality of the Roman saturnalia; the whole Puritan scheme of ethics will grow as archaic and incredible as the laws of the Salic Franks; such great Puritan prophets as Calvin, Wesley and Billy Sunday will become as fabulous as Torquemada. . . . But it will take waiting, Messieurs; it will take waiting!

FAILURES

AN EPISODE IN A TRAGEDY

By Belford Forrest

PEOPLE APPEARING IN THE PLAY:

MARIE LOUISE, COMTESSE DE PORTAL.

FELICIE DELACOUR (*A successful failure.*)

NANA (*An autocrat of the nursery.*)

BOY (*Deus ex machina.*)

DURING the winter of 1896, the *De Portals* sold their mansion on the Bois and moved to a dull, spacious flat on the second floor of a house in the Rue Merman, over against the Trocadero.

MARIE LOUISE hated the place. The fixtures were a perpetual eyesore. She endeavored to overcome them by crowding the rooms with furniture, but only succeeded in accentuating their dinginess.

Her boudoir, the scene of this play, is a rigid, rectangular room, hideous beyond redemption. The wall-paper, faded to a bilious green, is dotted here and there with remnants of gold *fleur-de-lis*. Before the folding doors, in the centre of the wall facing the audience, hang heavy drab curtains, from a fringed canopy of unspeakable plush. The doors open on the hall of the flat, where stands that hermaphroditic masterpiece of art and inconvenience, a combined hat-rack and umbrella stand. Flanking the doors are mirrors in faded gilt frames supported by narrow marble-topped tables with tired legs of gold, turning brown with age. On the tables are baskets of ferns and foliage, leaving the mirrors very little space for reflection. Two heavy, tall bookcases with glass doors of Gothic design, stand in the corners beside the mirrors, crowned with plaster busts of Voltaire and Victor Hugo.

In the wall, on the left as one enters the room, is an open fireplace with a conventional marble mantelpiece surmounted by a ponderous clock that strikes the hours, and two statuettes on ebony stands, their nakedness sheltered beneath thin glass shades. On the wall above is a copy of a Rubens in a massive gilt frame. To right and left of the picture hang rusty red bell ropes, rotten—from their rosettes of withered silk to the enormous tassels that moult at every touch. From the centre of the dull grey ceiling is suspended a hideous cut-glass chandelier. Little of the faded green carpet is visible. It is thickly strewn with a variety of rugs. Before the fireplace is a deep and low sofa covered with light cretonne. To the left stands a high-backed arm-chair similarly upholstered. Between the sofa and the chair is a table with flowers, books, magazines and a green-shaded reading lamp. It is possible to pass between the table and the sofa. At the other side of the fireplace, against the wall, is a small inlaid

writing-desk, with a fretwork top containing a little circular mirror; before it stands a gilt cane-bottomed chair.

No windows are shown in the stage-setting. That they are in the fourth wall is indicated by the positions of the writing-desk and the grand piano. The latter is on the right of anyone entering the room, set close to the wall, the player sitting with his back to the windows. The top of the piano resembles a bric-à-brac stall at a church bazaar. Over it is draped, pall-wise, an embroidered cloth, on which are crowded flower vases, knicknacks and a forest of framed photographs. In the curve of the piano is a standard lamp with a huge shade of red tissue-paper roses. It is fenced in by a small settee. In the corner, beside the piano stool, is a cabinet for music. There are far too many paintings and engravings on the walls. They are hung, without any regard to effect, wherever there is room for them, as in a picture gallery.

At the rise of the curtain the room is lighted by the lamps. The fire is burning brightly, and before it, on the sofa, NANA is seated. She is a stolid woman of the peasant class, about 50 years old; Irish by birth, her national characteristics little softened by her residence in Paris. She wears the plain black dress of a domestic, without cap or apron. Her hair, gray and thin, is parted and tightly drawn to the back of her head, where it is gathered in a heavy net. She sits rigidly staring at the fire.

The clock strikes twelve. After a short silence an outer door is heard to close. NANA instantly rises and takes a letter from beside the clock, looks at it hesitatingly and quickly replaces it on the mantelpiece as MARIE LOUISE enters.

MARIE LOUISE is a little red-haired woman, 30 years of age, the very essence of refinement and simplicity. But the impression of inward calm and self-possession conveyed by the quietness and grace of her movements is contradicted by the quick, nervous note in her voice. She is exquisitely dressed. Over a high-necked dinner gown she wears an opera cloak and furs. A long lace scarf is wrapped about her head and throat. Her only jewelry is a wedding ring. She stands in the doorway surprised at seeing NANA, who is coming towards her.

MARIE LOUISE:

Why, Nana! What's the matter? Is anything wrong with Boy?

NANA:

Nothin', praise God! He's asleep.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Relieved, removing her scarf and cloak and giving them to Nana. In a tone of mock despair.) Then why on earth don't you go to bed, Nana? I told you not to sit up for me.

NANA:

Yes, and I was just after goin' at nine o'clock when the master—

MARIE LOUISE:

(Instantly excited.) Is he here—

NANA:

He is not. (Significantly.) M'sieur le Compte was in a great hurry.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Resenting her tone.) What do you mean?

NANA:

(Placing Marie's wraps on the settee.) There's a letter for you on the mantelpiece.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Hurriedly going to the fireplace;

Nana watching her intently.) A letter.
(*As she reads.*) O mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Henri! Henri! Was he here? Did you see him?

NANA:

(*With the utmost unconcern.*) I did.

MARIE LOUISE:

What did he say?

NANA:

Nothin' in—

MARIE LOUISE:

(*Frantically.*) Tell me what he said.

NANA:

I was to give you the letter as soon as you come home—

MARIE LOUISE:

Did he say where he was going?

NANA:

He did not.

MARIE LOUISE:

Did you ask him?

NANA:

(*Contemptuously.*) I did not.

MARIE LOUISE:

If I only knew. Why wasn't I here! What shall I do! What shall I do!

NANA:

Do? Do nothing. Take it aisy, whatever it is.

MARIE LOUISE:

O Nana, there's a scandal on the Bourse and M'sieu' Henri must leave France.

NANA:

Lave the country!

MARIE LOUISE:

He's gone—(*breaking down.*) If he had only told me.

NANA:

'Twas about toime he went.

MARIE LOUISE:

You don't understand. It's the end of everything. We're ruined, dis-

graced. All Paris will know it tomorrow. We've got to leave here. (*Fiercely.*) I wouldn't care if I only knew where he is—if I were only with him.

NANA:

(*Crossing to back of sofa.*) More shame to you. Have you took lave of your sinses intoirely? Ruined, indade! If 'twas only himself he' ruined 'twould be the best thing he ever did. What about that innocent little lamb of a boy? 'Tis of him you should be thinking.

MARIE LOUISE:

Don't, Nana, don't!

NANA:

I'll speak, if it's the last time I iver speak. I've been a fool for holdin' me tongue.

MARIE LOUISE:

Please don't, Nana.

NANA:

I've a right to speak. You're my baby. Didn't I take you from your mother's arms when you was a week old, and didn't I know by the look in her eyes she was givin' you to me—God rest her soul—and when your father sold the ould place in Ireland and took you away from the convent and come over here, didn't I tell him he was actin' contrary to the will o' God, and there'd be no good come of it?

MARIE LOUISE:

(*Almost beside herself with irritation.*) We came here to be near mother's people.

NANA:

And mighty little notice they took of us 'til you married Count de Portal with his house on the Bois and a mint o' money, as your father ran round tellin' everybody.

MARIE LOUISE:

My father was very fond of M'sieur Henri.

NANA:

Your father was a poor judge of

character. If he were alive to-day he'd know what everybody knew that you were better in your coffin than married to—

MARIE LOUISE:

Nan, stop. I can't bear it.

NANA:

'Tis the truth I'm tellin' you. There's none so blind as them as won't see. Ruined, indade! Maybe you'll belave it now. 'Tis a foine finish and 'tis yourself's to blame, these ten years. Him with his drinkin' an' gamblin' and strange women and you the mother of his boy, sayin' nothin' and makin' belave he was the best husband woman ever had, and all the toime eatin' your heart out for a kind word from the worthless, good-for-nothin'—

MARIE LOUISE:

Nana! How dare you! Leave the room. Leave the house. Don't let me ever see you again. How dare you! (Two sharp knocks on the outer door. Marie Louise and Nana stand transfixed with fear.) Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!

NANA:

Mother o' God! (Marie Louise crosses to Nana, who puts her arms around her. The knocking on the door is repeated.)

MARIE LOUISE:

Who can it be?

NANA:

Maybe' tis the police.

MARIE LOUISE:

Something has happened to Henri. O Nana, Nana!

NANA:

Keep a brave heart, me darlin'.

(Marie Louise kisses Nana and breaks away from her. The knocking continues.)

MARIE LOUISE:

(Regaining her self-control.) Answer the door, Nana. (Nana goes out, closing the door. Marie Louise stands

by the sofa, her eyes closed, listening. Nana returns hurriedly, closing the door as she enters.)

MARIE LOUISE:

What is it?

NANA:

(Handing her a visiting card with ill-concealed disgust.) 'Tis the woman downstairs.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Amazed.) The woman downstairs. (Reading the card.) "Felicie Delacour." What does she want?

NANA:

(Sarcastically.) 'Tis yourself she's wantin'. Maybe it's news she has. (Marie Louise, with a gesture as if to silence her, turns quickly away to the fireplace and rests her head on her arm upon the mantelpiece. Nana continues—there is a note of triumph in her voice.) 'Tis a foine thing to have the loikes of her callin' on a countess. I told her you didn't recave at one in the morning.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Anxiously.) Has she gone?

NANA:

She has not. From the looks of her she's in trouble. Maybe she is. There's no knowin'.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Suddenly turning on Nana, looking steadily at her as if trying to read her thoughts and speaking with great emphasis in a low voice.) Nana, do you know anything about this woman?

NANA:

Sure, I know what everybody knows. She's one of them creatures that dances at theayters and has her picture took wearin' next to nothin' and has the impudence to live downstairs.

MARIE LOUISE:

Do you think— (Hastily checking herself.) It's impossible— He couldn't—not here in this house. (To Nana): Ask her to come in.

NANA:

(Indignantly.) Here? In here?

MARIE LOUISE:

Here. (Nana hesitates as if about to dispute the order then exits quickly. Marie Louise runs to the little glass over her desk and arranges her hair, moving up to the fireplace as the door opens.)

FELICIE DELACOUR

(She is a beautiful girl of 23, or thereabouts, exquisite as a flower. The picture of youth and innocence—fair-haired—blue-eyed—with nothing of the professional type about her. She is wearing a low-cut evening gown of soft white clinging material, rather simple and girlish in style, over which is thrown a magnificent cloak of Russian sables. Her hat and muff are of black velvet and cream lace applique, trimmed with sable. She is typically French in manner and speaks with an accent. On entering, she pauses a moment by the curtains, looking at Marie Louise, then comes quickly to the sofa, followed by Nana.)

Ah! Madam—Pardon—

MARIE LOUISE:

(With frigid politeness.) You wish to see me?

FELICIE:

A moment—if it is possible—alone.

MARIE LOUISE:

You need not stay, Nana.

(Nana, her curiosity foiled, gives vent to her disappointment by bestowing on Felicie a look of withering contempt and leaves the room. Felicie watches the door close.)

FELICIE:

(Much relieved.) Bien! All the evening I have wish so much to be here—and, now—at last.

MARIE LOUISE:

You have something to say to me?

FELICIE:

Ah, Madam! There is so much in

my heart. How can I tell you. It is three months since you have come here and, always, I have said to-morrow I will speak to her, and she will understand and forgive me. And now perhaps, to-morrow—

MARIE LOUISE:

I'm afraid I don't understand.

FELICIE:

To-night, already, everyone is talking of the scandal on the Bourse, L'affaire de Portal, and at supper, my friend, a very rich man, a banker tell me, "If Monsieur le Comte is wise he is not in Paris to-night, and to-morrow he will not be in France," and then he laugh at me because I am *triste* and there are tears in my eyes that I must perhaps lose *mon petit Henri*.

MARIE LOUISE:

Henri! *Mon Dieu!*

FELICIE:

I could not be 'appy any longer at Maxime's. I tell my friend I have the veree bad headache. He is chagrined. But he is a good fellow, and for him there is to-morrow. To-night I can think only of Henri.

MARIE LOUISE:

(With a supreme effort, speaking quietly.) Mademoiselle, I must beg of you to go.

FELICIE:

Ah! Madam—just a moment. If you only knew—

MARIE LOUISE:

(Unable to control herself any longer.) Stop. I know enough. Three months! Do you think I would have lived here three hours if I had known! What is it you want? To insult me? You cannot do that now. If it is money you need, the Comte de Portal is not here.

FELICIE:

Le Comte de Portal! (Realizing Marie Louise's mistake and almost amused by it.) I am afraid Madam has

made a leetle mistake—I do not know le Comte de Portal.

MARIE LOUISE:

Then what do you mean by speaking of him?

FELICIE:

It is the leetle boy—my leetle friend, Henri—

MARIE LOUISE:

Boy! (Laughing hysterically.) Boy!

FELICIE:

Boy—yes. He tell me he is called always Boy, but his name is Henri, and soon he will be a man, so it is better I call him Henri.

MARIE LOUISE:

Boy! And I thought— (Breaks down and cries, worn out by the strain.)

FELICIE:

(Coming quickly round the sofa and kneeling beside Marie Louise in a natural, girlish, impulsive manner.) Oh! Madam, it is good sometimes to cry a little.

MARIE LOUISE:

I did not know you were a friend of Boy. He makes so many friends.

FELICIE:

Mais si—we are veree great friends. Every morning when he go for his walk I look for him and wave my hand and he take off his hat veree seriously. If the dragon is not looking, I throw him a kiss.

MARIE LOUISE:

The dragon!

FELICIE:

The old woman—Nana. She does not like me. I am shocking for her. So it is necessary to be veree careful. But one day I find him on the stairs. Nana is asleep and he has run away with his gun to hunt bears. Neare shall I forget. More than one hour he was with me in my apartment. At first it is a veree polite visit. I talk, while the gentleman eat *chocolât*. Then when

there is no more *chocolât*, he says, he like me veree much, but it would be better if I was a bear—then he could shoot me. At once I am a bear—(*on her hands and knees.*) I am a veree tereeble bear and live in a cave under the table. When I come out there is much hunting. It is not always easy to shoot a bear, but if he is on top of the piano eet is not so *difficile*. And, when he falls off on to the floor and is absolutely *dead*—*c'est magnifique!* When I am three times a bear my hair come down, so then I am an Indian.

MARIE LOUISE:

(She has recovered her composure and is smiling.) O Boy, Boy— How he must have loved it. I'm afraid he—

FELICIE:

Madam is not angry?

MARIE LOUISE:

No, indeed—not at all—

FELICIE:

When I send him upstairs, I tell my maid to say it is my fault he stay so long, but the dragon is very angry. Always I have wish to tell you how much I have love your little boy.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Rising.) I understand. I am sorry I spoke as I did—but, to-night—to-night I am not myself. (Going to fireplace.)

FELICIE:

(Sitting on sofa.) O Madam—forgive me. It is terrible for you. Perhaps I have done wrong to come—but when I see the light up here I could not help it. Since you have live here I have like you so much, and the leetle boy always he is for me *my* leetle boy, and now, if you go away, I shall be veree lonely.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Catching at the word.) Lonely! You sing all day like a bird and are always so gay. I have often envied you your happiness.

FELICIE:

My happiness!—To be gay, to sing, to dance,—is not to be happy.

MARIE LOUISE:

But your success—everyone says you are a success—

FELICIE:

Everyone makes me a success. It is good to be a success, but often I think it is better to have a leetle boy. I would rather play at bears with Henri than dance for a King. O Madam—it is good for you that you have your leetle boy. If he were mine I could nevare be lonely—

MARIE LOUISE:

(*Sitting in the armchair.*) That's not true— It's not true. You don't know what you're saying. There's a loneliness in some women's hearts that no child can fill—you don't know.

FELICIE:

Ah! but I do. You think I do not know because I am myself a child. It is true I am not yet 23. But for six years I have been in Paris—alone.

MARIE LOUISE:

Paris! Paris! I hate the very name.

FELICIE:

Nowhere in the world is there such loneliness. For seventeen years I live in the country. Then love come to me. (*Bitterly.*) Love! The beautiful butterfly—all wings, that one sees only when the sun is shining. This butterfly one cannot keep—because it dies—so soon.

MARIE LOUISE:

Love does not die—it cannot.

FELICIE:

Yes, I have believe that too—when I was seventeen. For all one summer I have believe it and I was happy. Never before in the world was there such happiness. My heart could not hold it all— But when the winter come—my butterfly is gone—and my heart is empty—I would have kill my-

self if I had not known there was another love coming to me.

MARIE LOUISE:

Another love!

FELICIE:

Oui. I ran away—to Paris—here, where nobody knows me. To work and wait—for my baby. (*A short pause.*) If my baby had live— Ah! Madam, you think I do not know what it is to be lonely. It is you with your baby—who do not know.

MARIE LOUISE:

Yes, I have my boy— But a child is only love's image—love's shadow, it cannot take love's place. Nothing in the world can. I love my baby—and sometimes I think he's all the dearer to me (*bitterly*) because he was a failure.

FELICIE:

A failure! Oh, Madam, he is—

MARIE LOUISE:

Yes, a failure. Until to-night I have hoped and prayed and believed it was not possible. But to-night I know—he is a failure.

FELICIE:

I would give all my success for such a failure—

MARIE LOUISE:

We are both failures—my baby and I. It was for his father that he was born. They told me I couldn't have a child—that it would kill me. But there's nothing love can ask love will not give. I could have died happy with my baby in my arms if my husband had loved me for just one hour.

FELICIE:

Your husband! Comte de Portal! For him?

MARIE LOUISE:

For his love there is nothing I would not give—nothing I would not do.

FELICIE:

Ah! Madam, you do not know what he is—this man you love—

MARIE LOUISE:

Oh, yes—but I do. I know him better than anyone else can ever know him. You can't tell me anything about him that I don't know.

FELICIE:

You know what all Paris is saying of him to-night?

MARIE LOUISE:

(Rising and moving restlessly about the room.) Do you think that can make any difference. For years I have known that some day something terrible would happen and I have waited for it, prayed for it in the hope that it would bring him back to me—and to-night—I wasn't here, I wasn't here!

FELICIE:

But what could you have done? It is not possible for him to stay here.

MARIE LOUISE:

No, but I would have gone with him anywhere if he had only asked me. My love would have found some way of helping him. There's no poverty or disgrace I couldn't face gladly with him—if he only wanted me. Anyway he would have known it—he couldn't help knowing it to-night—and I wasn't here.

FELICIE:

(Incredulously.) If he had come to you to-night you would have forgiven him everything?

MARIE LOUISE:

Everything.

FELICIE:

You know, too, his life. You know why it is he is ruined. That it is Miriamne of the Olympia that is—

MARIE LOUISE:

Yes. I know that, too. Soon after we came to this hideous place I was shopping in the Rue de la Paix. In a carriage coming from the Place de l'Opera were Miriamne and my husband. As they passed I bowed and smiled. The horses were mine, that I

supposed he had sold when we gave up our house on the Bois. We have never spoken of that meeting but I shall always be glad that I bowed—and smiled.

FELICIE:

(With a shrug of her shoulders.) Men do not understand such love. It is too cheap.

MARIE LOUISE:

Too cheap! It has cost me everything.

FELICIE:

Yes, and you give it to him for nothing—so to him it is nothing.

MARIE LOUISE:

Love does not count the cost—

FELICIE:

You do not know men as I do. I have many lovers.

MARIE LOUISE:

Yes, but you do not love them.

FELICIE:

Love them! No, mon Dieu, no. They are nothing to me. When a man is my lover he pays much for veree leetle.

MARIE LOUISE:

You call that love.

FELICIE:

That is what men call it. It costs a great deal. I am very expensive.

MARIE LOUISE:

And you measure a man's love by what he gives—

FELICIE:

No—but he does. When a man gives a great deal for veree leetle I measure only his foolishness.

MARIE LOUISE:

What fools men are!

FELICIE:

And women? Do we not sometimes give much for veree leetle? Ah! Madam, there is for everything a price—even love.

MARIE LOUISE:

You cannot sell love.

FELICIE:

It is the only thing in the world you cannot give away. Nobody wants it for nothing. If ever love comes to me again—I will sell it.

MARIE LOUISE:

For what? Sables and diamonds?

FELICIE:

No, *mon Dieu*, no—for *love*, and for nothing else in the world.

MARIE LOUISE:

I have never asked for anything else.

FELICIE:

Ah! Madam, you have not asked—you have only *given*, and bowed and smiled—is it not so?

MARIE LOUISE:

Love knows no other way of asking. If love comes to you again you will give as you gave before.

FELICIE:

For nothing?

MARIE LOUISE:

Perhaps—for nothing.

FELICIE:

Nevaire. Nevaire.

MARIE LOUISE:

Yes, you *must*. (*Ecstatically*.) You will give as I have given 'til there is nothing left to give—

(As Marie Louise speaks the door slowly opens and Boy's head appears. He is five years old, rather small for his age and delicate in appearance. He has red curly hair and is dressed in blue pajamas. His feet are bare.)

BOY:

(At the door—in a small frightened voice.) Mummie—I'se frightened.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Going to him.) Boy!

FELICIE:

Oh, the leetle angel!

MARIE LOUISE:

(*Bending over Boy and mothering him.*) My boy frightened? What was it, dear? A dream! Never mind. And in your bare feet, too. What would Nana say? Come over by the fire—

(*While Marie Louise is talking to the boy, Felicie watches them, evidently overjoyed at the child's appearance, and giving vent to her feelings in sympathetic exclamations. At the reference to his bare feet she hastily takes the cloak from the settee. As she turns to offer it to Marie Louise, Boy recognizing her, slips from under his mother's arm and holds out his hand—shyly. Marie Louise smiles at Felicie and moves on toward the fireplace.*)

FELICIE:

(*Shaking Boy's hand and then dropping on her knees beside him.*) Oh, you darlin'! You have not forgot me?

BOY:

(*His shyness taking sudden flight, with a cry of delight throws himself into her arms and whispers something, evidently of supreme importance.*)

FELICIE:

Oh, *mon petit!* Non, non, ce n'est pas possible. Zee bears are all gone to sleep. To-morrow perhaps, but to-night it is too late— See, I wrap you up in this big, big cloak—there (picking him up in her arms and kissing him.) Time for all little boys to go to sleep like the bears. (Carrying him over to Marie Louise, who is standing facing the fire. In her hand is Henri's letter that she picked up as she passed her desk. Her desolation and misery are intense. As Felicie comes to her with Boy she sits in the armchair. Almost mechanically she takes Boy from Felicie.)

FELICIE:

I think there is someone who will be veree soon asleep. (She stands for a moment by the table looking at Marie Louise and her baby.) Madam, you have still much to give. Some day Monsieur le Comte will come back.

MARIE LOUISE:

(Slowly echoing her.) He will come back to me.

FELICIE:

No, Madam, he will come back to his baby.

(Marie Louise gathers Boy close to her breast and her face grows radiant with new hope. Felicie, with a shrug of her shoulders, goes slowly towards the door.)

CURTAIN



HER ONLY SON

By William Sanford

HE was an only son, devoted to his mother, and of course the idol of her heart.

He married a brisk, up-to-date young woman, and went away, many hundreds of miles, to live—because his wife wanted to live there.

. . . . One day, while seated on the piazza, he suddenly slapped his knee in emphasis of a sudden thought.

"What's the matter?" asked his wife.

"Why," he exclaimed, "I just happened to think—time goes so fast—I haven't seen mother for eleven years!"



ARTISTS

By Amanda B. Hall

I WATCH her each day when she comes
With sketch-kit to my lovely scene,
Her brushes eager to describe
The blue and gold and green.

And each day, sighing soft despair,
She wanders home with weary grace,
The beauty that she could not paint
Transfiguring her face.

She does not know that I who stand,
So unobtrusively apart,
Bear songs that I would sing for her
Unfinished, in my heart!



THE wise man frankly disbelieves nine-tenths of what a woman tells him, and is suspicious of the rest.

PURGED

By William Merriam Rouse

Mrs. Abigail Stoughton begins the story.

I secured him from the Prison Association. I usually go to the Association for my outside men. They said his real name was William Hether-ton, although he bore some disgusting soubriquet. He had been a prize fighter and a highwayman, I believe. However, in taking a man I put his past crimes out of my mind. For in order to cultivate a certain mental attitude in another it is necessary that one should maintain the same attitude oneself. To help obliterate the past I always call my outside man "James," no matter what his baptismal name may have been. It is part of the purging process, you understand. I purge them of the past—that is my work. Besides, James is an excellent name for a servant.

At the same time that I took this James I also took a new parlor maid from the Women's Night Court, in accord with my usual custom. Her name had been Fanny Eames, and she had adopted another as that kind of person always does. Invariably I call my parlor maids Mary Ann.

These two cases were particularly interesting from the first. They began, so to speak, on the same day and, all in all, they were the most difficult I ever undertook. The man gave me trouble all the time. He was an abominable creature. He appreciated nothing. I had repapered the room over the stable—in a sober gray—for him and put up some very good but inexpensive prints of the Masters—Botticelli and the like, you know. And there was a little shelf of books. These were all new for experience with the preceding James had

taught me that this type of mind does not care to read upon abstract subjects. There was Motley's History of the Dutch Republic, biographies of several statesmen, and other works of the same sound and interesting nature.

In spite of all this I caught the fellow smoking, time and again. Tobacco is immoral because it tends to relax the rigidity of attitude that is necessary for a strict adherence to duty. I told James so. He would have gone away then, if he had dared. But, as always with my cases, he was on parole and he had his choice between my helpfulness and a return to the degradation of prison. He continued to smoke surreptitiously.

His second impertinence was in connection with Mary Ann. It was not necessary for them to speak to each other at all, for their lines of duty did not meet at any point, yet I caught them exchanging a word now and then at the back door. My cook, who is a very religious person and has been with me several years, agreed to inform me as to their relations in so far as she could find them out. But she, as well as I, mistook the attitude of these two cases toward each other until it was too late.

II

William Hether-ton, alias Bill the Bearcat, alias James, continues.

If it hadn't been for the girl I would of took a chance and beat it, believe me! But after I see her, the second day, I was willing to put up with most anything from the drum-major: that's what I called the old lady that got me transferred from Sing Sing to a cell in her barn.

The girl come out back with a rug and a broom. There was little sparkles in her hair, where the sun hit it—and the same in her eyes. I see she wasn't the drum-major's kind, so I spoke.

"Want any help?"

"Who are you?" she asks me; not but what she knew.

"I'm the outside man," I told her. Then I tried to say my new moniker, "James," the way the old lady pulled it, and we both laughed.

"You look more like an inside man—get me?" she said, and I knew she was all right. I grinned.

"Honest, I'm an outside man—gas-pipe, mostly."

"Well, James," she says, "you're built for a strong-arm. But you ain't strong in the head—you made a mistake this morning."

"How's that?"

"You just had a smoke! I smell it!"

"Going to snitch?" I was sore, understand, at the way the drum-major had been after me. That's why I spoke sharp. It put me in bad.

"What do you mean, you big stiff!" The girl stuck her nose up in the air and walked into the house.

"Some girl!" says I to myself, going back to the barn. "And I'm a boob!"

I had been, sure, for it was a week before I got a pleasant word out of her—all because I'd said "snitch."

I sure did fall hard for Mary Ann—that was the moniker the drum-major had give her—or I'd never stuck there. Some people is nuts on one thing and some people is nuts on another, but this old dame was nuts on everything. She had papered my room with gray to look like a cell—what fer I don't know—and then she'd plastered highbrow books and pictures of naked angels all over the walls. Every time I talked to her I got mad and dizzy, both to once.

Well, I'll skip all the part about how I lay in my cell wondering what I was going to do and making up my mind a little different every day. I'll just tell what happened. After a while Mary Ann quit handing me bum language

when we met, and loosened up and said her real name was Fanny Eames, but she hadn't used it for a long time. I didn't care. It's how a guy feels, not how he acts, that counts—same with a girl.

One day when the drum-major was out and the cook, who was a real snitch, was asleep, I got a good chance to talk to Fanny.

"I want to marry you," I said, just like that. I never could talk smooth.

"You're crazy!" she says.

"I know it," I tells her. "You're bug-house, too, if you marry me—but I hope you are!"

"Why, Bill! Even if I was bug the drum-major wouldn't stand for that—we ain't purged yet!"

That was the old girl's joss word, see? It made me sore enough to cuss, but I didn't.

"Would you marry me if I had that part doped out?"

"Marry! Marry!" says she, kind of low, with a funny look in her eyes. "I didn't never expect to get married!"

"Neither did I—will you?"

"Yes."

I felt like I was joy riding in an airship. I guess the idea of getting married give us both the same kind of jolt. We had been used to taking our fun quick and paying for it hard. Here was a new hunch. But I see that Fanny had something on her mind—it was the same thing I had been thinking about.

"I get you, kid," I says. "You don't need to spill it. I'm going to work days instead of night after we make our getaway—I used to be a good blacksmith before I leaned on a guy so hard they called it felonious assault."

At that she lit up like a church.

"Have the bulls got anything on you now?" she says.

"No, I done three bits," I told her. "I'm square—now."

"Then we don't need to hide!"

"You got a bum hunch. Where's the money for a flat coming from? Besides, like you just said, the drum-major wouldn't stand for it."

"Oh, Bill, we better not take any chances!"

"Chances!" says I. "We're taking chances staying here. One of these days you or me will bust out at the old girl and she'll have us put away again. The only thing to do is to lift that bunch of ice she's got stowed away in the library safe and beat it. We'll lay low for a month, maybe, and then I'll go to work regular!"

Fanny thought that over careful and she see I was right. Only she made some improvements.

"Don't bust the box and take everything," she said. "It'll make the drum-major black in the face and she'll offer a big reward. Leave the diamonds alone all except one ring, maybe, that will bring about a hundred. I can get the combination to the safe and she won't miss one ring for a while. It's better to have a honeymoon at Coney Island than up the river."

"That's good dope," I told her. "I don't need much money if you don't."

Just then we heard the old lady coming in the front door and I had to beat it. It seemed like she suspected something and between her and the cook, her stool pigeon, chances to talk to Fanny was scarce. But in a couple of weeks we got things figured out, and waited for the right time to turn the trick.

One night the drum-major went out to hear another reformer spill a bunch of talk and left cooky on guard. Then cooky had one of her chronic tooth-aches and filled herself full of laudanum, as usual. Fan and I went up to look at her after she hit the hay. She was making a noise like a forge bellows.

All I had to do was to go down in the library and turn the knob on the safe. It was a shame to leave that stuff, but I only took one sparkler, a ring. Then we packed our grips and beat it.

On account of its being one of them rubberneck Jersey towns we didn't dare take the train—some of the bums at the railroad station might know us. We walked out of town and picked up a Hoboken trolley. The rest was easy.

It was a fine spring night and we took the ferry. You know how Manhattan and the river looks on a night like that—big, black buildings spotted with lights and the dark blue sky back of that. Then there's the boats sliding around kind of like slow fireworks. Say, I took hold of the kid's arm so hard she yelped!

We went uptown on the Ninth avenue L and found a furnished room along in the middle west side where there was about a square mile of blocks that all looked alike. That was just as I'd planned. Believe me, the lonesome west side is the best place for a fade-away.

I left Fan there and went downtown again to pound my ear in a two-bit joint. The next morning I hunted up old Mandelbaum, passed him the ring for a hundred, and beat it uptown for the girl. We got our license, there was an alderman waiting for his graft, and at noon we walked across City Hall Park—married!

The sun was shining, putting them sparkles in Fanny's hair. I wanted to blow the hundred for clothes for her but she said no, we had got to hang onto it and do like we planned. But she didn't kick about getting a plain gold ring and blowing us to the big eats. Then we went home. Get me? Home!

I forgot all about the bulls, and the drum-major, and three stretches up the river. I felt as frisky as a colt and acted as tame as an old cart horse. For a real wild time we'd go to the movies and then afterwards I'd get some beer, in a can, and some sandwiches. Fan got prettier every day. She fixed herself up some clothes out of nothing, and folks used to turn around to look at her on the street.

After a couple of weeks I got a fair job in a little, out of the way shop—just what I wanted. I could of earned more somewhere else but I liked the place I had, working alone with the boss. He was an old man who took things easy and didn't ask questions. The only trouble was not being able to

save much of anything toward furniture and a flat.

That was the way things went for a while. It seemed to me the only thing that could happen to us was to get pinched, and I didn't believe much in that on account of having took Fan's dope and only lifting one ring. And just as I got my mind made up for good that trouble was a back number things begun to happen—inside of me, which is the worst place for them to happen to a guy.

III

Fanny Eames, alias Gladys Gloucester, alias Mary Ann, concludes the story.

I noticed the change in Bill pretty soon after I told him there was going to be a baby. At first I didn't pay much attention to it because I was busy thinking, and sewing, and having a real good time with myself. Then an idea popped into my head one day, and I knew it had been hanging out just around the corner of my mind for a long time.

This idea was about the baby. The kid is going to get a bad start, thinks I, for he'll have to be christened under the name we took, which was Jones. And he'd always be in danger of having his dad and his mother pinched. If we hadn't been so near square with the cops of course I would of give it up as a bad job. But it seemed a shame for the kiddie to be done out of a fair start just for a ring that didn't fetch but a hundred.

I didn't say anything to Bill for he had enough on his hands. Besides, I didn't know how he'd look at it—probably say I was nervous, and like that. My idea was to get enough money to pay for the ring and then walk right up to the drum-major and tell her about being married regular and ask her to square things. I thought I could get away with it if I put the salve on thick enough about being saved by her from a life of crime, and some more movie stuff. I had got the whole scene fixed

up from one of the shows Bill took me to.

The big job was to get the cash. Bill having got a hundred from a fence meant that the ring was worth a lot more. I got to cut out some of my big talk from the scene with the drum-major and put on the soft-pedal—forgive me, and all that. I'd hand her a hundred to show good intentions and beg for time. But the more I hunted through the papers for some kind of work that would fit me the more I got discouraged about getting even a hundred.

Bimeby I had a hunch. Why not try to bust into the big time? That's what I did. I had some good clothes—but not loud—for Bill was free-handed. So I dressed up and answered an advertisement for a young lady to stay in a doctor's office from nine to one every day. The doctor was a nice old guy, with whiskers. He didn't try to get fresh and after we'd talked a little while he give me the job. Ten bucks a week for just stalling around!

After Bill went to work I'd change my clothes and get to the doctor's in plenty of time. I done what housework there was to do in the afternoons. But it's quite a job to cook and keep things neat, specially in a furnished room, and that summer sure was a broiler in Manhattan. I got pale and I guess I was kind of dopey in the evenings for lots of times I had rather gone to bed than out with Bill. I didn't dare tell him for I was dead set on my idea and afraid he would stop it.

Then Bill begun to notice I wasn't up to the mark. After I went to sleep on the Coney Island boat one night he didn't take me out any more, but begun to stay home evenings and set by the window with his pipe and a can of beer and think. That didn't last long. One night he come home from work whistling. Right after supper he put on a collar and shaved himself.

"I'm going out tonight, kid," says he. "They're oiling up the machine for election—I'm going to help start a club in this ward."

"You must be a nut," I told him, "to get into politics fixed the way we are. Somebody will spot you, sure."

"The boss'll look out for me."

It might be like Bill the Bearcat to take chances, but it wasn't like Bill Jones. What for did he put on his collar and best clothes to go out with the boys? Besides, his whistle hadn't sounded like the real thing. After he'd gone I pulled the gas jet around in front of the mirror. It didn't need more than half a minute to tell me that I'd gone kind of flat in looks.

Of course I wasn't sure of anything but just the same it was a mighty lonesome evening—the first Bill and I hadn't been together. That was only the beginning. He kept paying less and less attention to me and he dressed up and went out five nights a week, regular.

With the double work, and the heat, and everything, I was near crazy. One night I followed him and made sure. He walked about ten blocks and went into a big building. I hung around outside for two hours—I was near dead—till I saw him come out with a girl. It knocked me stone cold. He went off with her somewhere.

After that I guess I would of done something foolish—like buying a gat and plugging Bill—if it hadn't been for the baby and having my mind set on giving him a fair start. I had thought a lot of Bill. My looks got worse until even the doctor noticed it and said I was to take a week off with pay in advance and come back with red cheeks. He meant well.

That was a Saturday and I went home dead tired but with twenty dollars, which just made my hundred. I intended to go over to see the drum-major that afternoon but when I got home I passed out. A couple of hours later I come to laying on the floor. They'd been a shower and it was cooler. So I managed to get up and set by the window.

It come to me then that I'd have to quit Bill for good. I wondered if I couldn't get the old doc to put me in

a hospital or something for a while. I was sitting there like that, getting sicker of living every minute, when they come a knock at the door.

"Come in!" says I, thinking maybe it was the women across the hall.

The door opened and in walked the drum-major. Behind her was a guy anybody could of told was a bull, although he didn't have his harness. Pinched, thinks I, and I don't know as I care, at that.

"Well?" says the old girl, as soon as she spotted me.

"Have a chair, Mrs. Stoughton, you and your friend," says I, getting out my best manners. "Excuse me if I don't get up—I don't feel very good."

The plain clothes man, he settled down in a chair and put his hands on his knees; waiting for her say so to make the pinch.

"Where is the man?" she asks me, looking all around the room. "Is he still with you?"

"My husband is away to work," I told her.

"Husband—" she stopped all of a sudden for she had lamped our marriage certificate, which was framed and hung up. She read it and says: "Humph!"

All of a sudden it come to me that Bill would be home pretty quick. There was a bulge in the cop's pocket that meant bracelets. Bill would go up the river, sure. Then I knew I was still soft on him, and couldn't help it.

"Did you come to arrest me?" I said. She looked at me kind of funny.

"Well! I certainly intend to have the man arrested, for burglarizing my safe and stealing a diamond ring!"

"You better let him alone," I told her. "I got the combination to the safe out of your desk and lifted the ring. I lied to Bill about how I got the money. He's working at his trade as a blacksmith—he can prove himself a clean record every since he left your place. The Price Association can send him back on account of the parole—but maybe they won't."

She glared at me and I see I'd made

a break by not putting it up to her instead of the Association. She liked to be the whole works.

"In my opinion you're both guilty!"

"I got a hundred saved up to pay you back, Mrs. Stoughton!" I thought I'd try the salve, so I got the money and handed it to her. "I've been working—"

Just then I passed out again. When I come to I was propped up in the chair with the cop looking mad and the old lady holding her smelling salts.

"Poor, misguided girl!" says she. I was going to talk back when the door opened and in come Bill. He looked like a blacksmith. All sweaty and dirty and a fine figure of a man. He piped the cop and the drum-major.

"Will you wait till I wash up?" he asks the bull, but I could see he was hit awful hard. "I'll go quiet."

The bull he nodded to the drum-major, as much as to say ask her.

"Your—er—wife tells me she took my ring," says she.

"Her?" says Bill, just as natural as though he wasn't lying. "She don't know nothing about it except what I told her after it was all done. I can prove I done it!"

"Haw! Haw!" laughed the cop. It was the first time he opened his mouth. The drum-major froze him up with a look.

"Mary Ann has just paid me a hundred dollars in partial restitution—"

"A hundred dollars!" roars Bill, and, honest, he scared me stiff. "Where did you get a hundred dollars?"

"I earnt it working in a doctor's office!" I was mad as well as scared.

"Oh!" He looked dizzy for a minute. "So that's why—"

"Happiness cannot be builded upon crime!" booms the drum-major. She was having a good time, the old nut. "You were not purged—"

"Why don't you go ahead and make the pinch?" That "purged" had made Bill mad. "Only I warn you, don't touch the girl!"

"I had already decided not to," the old lady tells him, stiff and pompous.

"She has shown a desire to make restitution, but you—"

"Aw, why don't you own up you're doing it just to get square?" growls Bill. "What more do you want, now you got your ring back?"

I thought he had gone dippy.

"Ring—back?" she says.

"Sure! I got it off the guy that bought it of me and sent it to your house this noon—followed the messenger and seen him take it there!"

"Oh!" It was her turn to be set back. "I have been in town all day—is there a telephone in this place?"

She sailed out in the hall where the public 'phone was and Bill and me and the bull set and looked at each other. Then I had a hunch.

"Where did you get the money for that ring?" I says, pointing at Bill.

"Learning a lot of young dubs blacksmithing, nights, in a trade school," he tells me. "Some job! I had to herd around with highbrow female teachers. I'm glad it's over."

"Oh!" says I. I wanted to hug Bill, only the cop was there and I was scared stiff for fear of what the drum-major was going to do.

"Highbrows make me sick!" Bill was getting madder all the time.

"Me too!" says the cop. Then he turned redder than natural for the drum-major had popped in behind him.

"You may go!" says she to him, real unfriendly. She was sore all around but she still thought mighty well of herself. "I learn that the ring has been returned—I am glad that the influence of my home has had some result, even though you chose to leave it! I shall not prosecute!"

Then she sailed out behind the cop and slammed the door.

"Bill," I said, kind of faint, for I was just plain weak with relief. "What did you pull that stuff about the political club for?"

"Thought you'd think I was a nut if I told the truth," says he. "But I wanted to fix things up so the kid wouldn't have a bum start—he can wear his own moniker now."

THE PERNICIOUS INFLUENCE

By Lilith Benda

HOW these yellows pounce upon the affair!"

Frank Pell felt in a daze, felt a numbness creep over him as he stared at the two pictures flaunted upon the newspaper's front page, one of Augustus Joseph Moran—A. J. Moran as he was known throughout the country—fat, fishy-eyed, gaudily dressed, with thick, loose lips that epitomized with their grossness all he stood for, and beside it, damned by such juxtaposition, the spiritual mouth and wistful eyes of little Christine Carroll.

For a long time, half incredulous, he continued to stare. And when finally he turned to the photograph of her hanging on his wall, it struck him that the dainty features appeared hardened, coarsened, cheapened, stripped of all their fineness as by some noisome agency operating now, at last, openly, and in readiness, he felt, to vent the full potency of its bane upon him, rather than upon the ingenuous-eyed Christine.

A. J. Moran's picture had appeared often in the newspapers. Only a few weeks before, when he had made a timely and unlamented demise, they had been prominently featured. Beginning as a bartender, advancing to potentate behind the thrones of a score of brothel-keepers, the path by which he travelled, never trusted, always feared, to unsavory political prominence, had been made the subject of innumerable editorial diatribes. The gigantic ruby always blazing on his shirt-front had been emphasized many times, together with his lemon-colored spats and waist-coats, in oppressor-of-the-masses cartoons. Swinger of votes, controller of

legislatures, propeller of franchises, concessions, ordinances, dread of assemblymen, go-between at home alike in capitalists' sanctums and underworld dives, raker-in of stupendous emoluments, boss, grafter, renegade, welcher, sycophant, thief, too crafty ever to be enmeshed by the muck-rakers, too astute not to command respect along with intense dislike, he had been the central figure of manifold high-wrought episodes. And now the will whereby, with supreme insolence, he left an art collection to the city he had pillaged, and five million dollars to Christine Carroll, was causing another nine-day sensation.

Nor were the delicate features of Christine by any means unfamiliar to the news-reading public. Her celebrity gave additional pith to the equivocally worded aspersions. For five years she had been the pet of the populace; for five years her name had been blazoned on myriad bill-boards; for five years she had been acclaimed the supreme, living proof that stage ladies may be respectable, and had packed theaters with a following gleaned from the ranks of the church-going conservatives; for five successive years she had been the heroine of five successive comedies, all of them whimsical, all of them sentimental, all of them wholesome to a superlative degree—and all of them from the prolific pen of Frank Pell.

"My high-bred Lady Dainty shown up at last as the wiliest little wench who ever sought shekels among the sewers!"

Pell turned from the photograph in disgust, and flung himself dejectedly upon a couch, the surge of color which

always accompanied an emotion to any extent profound mounting over his fair skin. He was an exceptionally good-looking man, tall, well-knit, blond, young-looking for his thirty years, and of a patrician cast of countenance that proclaimed a heritage of fine instinct and good breeding—that was answerable, too, for his air of old-world fastidiousness, and nostalgia for other climes and other times.

A lolling sybarite with no proneness for the exactions of achievement, nevertheless he possessed a keen flair for the achievements of others that coincided with his ideas of the true and the beautiful. And, for all his inclination gracefully to lounge through existence, when five years ago he had suddenly found his patrimony spent, and penury ahead, a sharpness of wit incongruous to the dreamer had enabled him to meet the exigency. Without the remotest tendency toward play writing, with no particular gift for it, he had hit upon an innocuous little formula based upon the theory that, if only virtue were made ultimately triumphant, if only a melodramatic encounter between vice and innocence were injected, if only a saccharine whimsicality were put in the place of ready wit, then hero and villain might be combined, and invested with a degree of distinction, heroine endowed with a measure of breeding, dialogue with intelligence—and the resultant play acclaimed as a brilliant, era-making novelty, not because of the dialogue's intelligence, the heroine's breeding, or the hero-villain's distinction, but because virtue had been made triumphant, a melodramatic encounter between vice and innocence injected, and ready wit replaced by saccharine whimsicality. In an obscure stock company he had discovered his heroine in Christine Carroll, and for five years five slight variations of the formula had provided him with an income eminently satisfactory, steadily increasing, and flung away lavishly from day to day.

This income, he realized, was now abruptly discontinued. The impeccable respectabilities, the dowdy dowagers

and seedy paterfamilias who towed their callow youth in droves to Christine's performances would, once they seized upon the inference of A. J. Moran's strange bequest, feel themselves duped and outraged. Her audiences were gone. The formula seemed useless. And his bank account was undeniably low. . . . But it was something more significant even than monetary considerations which caused him, too, to feel duped and outraged. The news staggered with all the force of a cataclysmic shock. It stunned; it stupefied, and brought in its train a rankling wound.

Frank Pell's affairs with women had not been few and far between. Yet, with the tenacity of a dreamer, he had cherished certain illusions concerning them which for some time Christine Carroll had kept from fading. He had never known her intimately; never, save professionally, seen her or spoken to her a great deal. The shy, virginal girl, so little and helpless looking, and yet with dark head held always high, had proven elusive to a perplexing degree. He had wanted to know her better. Lately he had determined to see her oftener, had gone even so far as to consider her in the light of an altogether suitable life partner. And now, to realize that all the time she had been stirring him almost to veneration, a sordid liaison had been going on between her and a creature than whom none could be more crass—to look again at the newspaper, and see her chaste little face beside the face of A. J. Moran. . . .

Indignantly he sprang from the couch and walked toward the window. It was a still, languorous day in May, and the afternoon sunshine pouring in upon him oppressed with its note of tedious joy. He drew the curtains closely, and was again approaching the couch, when the telephone rang.

Before he answered he was conscious of a necessity courteously to restrain his resentment. Instinctively he knew it was she.

"I'm coming to tea."

The abruptness of her onset left him dumb.

"I'm coming to tea—don't you hear?" the faint voice repeated a little more loudly.

"Oh, are you?" The unexpectedness of it all precluded him from expressing his decided disinclination for any such visit. "Would—would it be quite advisable?"

He thought he heard a faint laugh, the very shade of a laugh. "Oh, quite. It's quite, quite proper for an improper lady to visit her gentlemen friends, you know."

She paused, and since he failed to answer, went on: "Rather the usual thing even, isn't it?"

Again he made no reply, and again he fancied he heard her laughter. "Until five o'clock then—good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Methodically he wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead, folded the newspaper and put it into a drawer, took her photograph down from the wall, and then for some minutes stood pondering.

What did she want with him? Why was she coming here? Why hadn't he denied himself to her? Why not telephone, scout the idea of a visit, rid himself of her once and for all? Why was he feeling this keen curiosity, this excitation, this anticipatory pleasure even at the idea of her coming? And why, counterweighing it, did the repulsive image of A. J. Moran so persistently obtrude?

II

WHEN for the first time Christine Carroll crossed his threshold, Pell's consciousness of an impending blush only sent the color, when abruptly it surged, more swiftly over his face. He was painfully embarrassed, oscillant between an impulse to be kind to the lovely little creature, and a desire openly to express his condemnation of such standards as hers.

"You're cross with me, Frank?" Never before had he been other than

"Mr. Pell." In her attitude, too, and her smile, he sensed a new intimacy blended with what seemed a new distinction of manner, which, for all his unwillingness, made for conciliation.

A tiny hand hesitantly extended, she appeared to waver, to retreat a little with the advance of each timid step. From under a large brimmed hat which accentuated with its size her diminutiveness, her big eyes pleaded pacification. Golden brown eyes they were, shot with yellow—"eyes of a startled fawn," "pansy petal eyes," he had called them in his plays, aware that only such well-worn terms served convincingly to describe her. "Calla lilies" exactly evoked the smooth creaminess of her skin, "pale coral" the tint of lips wistfully drooping, and fading at the ends into infantine ambiguity.

It was as if these worn-out figures had sprung forth as novelties in paeans sung centuries ago, and still retained, when applied to her, some of their pristine freshness. For about her there hovered a suggestion of bygone days and faraway lands. With a touch of the exotic, she diffused a strange allure of antiquity. He noticed that despite a few pearls and a more conspicuous smartness than had been permissible in the days of girlish hats and simple dresses, in the black chiffon and lace fichu of her frock there was struck that out-of-date note, primarily her note, which reached his other senses in a faint fragrance of rosemary wafted toward him, and in the irresponsible little voice, low, lilting, and seeming to float into silence before a phrase was quite completed—which bespoke irresolution, uncertainty, a languorous, melancholy detachment from the uncouthness of the jaded present, and surrender to the old-world spell that Pell, too, found full of allure.

He answered only with a smile and a shake of his head. As if with the smile she saw her plea for conciliation accepted, an elusive dimple appeared, and she laughed lightly, almost soundlessly. Her laugh had always struck him somewhat in the nature of an

anomaly, for scarce audible though it was, the sudden flash of teeth and fleetingly fulgent eyes implied an intensity at odds with her wonted lassitude, a something pyrotechnic behind her air of somnolence.

"How nice of you not to be cross!"

She had removed her gloves, and laid a soft, palliative little palm within his hand, looking eagerly into his eyes as if in search of a last gleam of censure yet to be wheedled away. He noticed that she stood very close to him, and that she permitted her hand to linger in his a moment longer than the urbanities required.

"I couldn't bear to have you cross," she went on after a pause. "Ill temper blends so badly with the springtime. It's such a lazy, sunshiny time now, isn't it, with summer just coming on? Springtime in the mountains now . . . wouldn't it be . . ." She fell silent for an instant, and her eyes wavered before she continued: "It makes one feel mild, and gracious, and benign, doesn't it? Do you know, on a day like this I should like nothing better than to forgive someone a great wrong. And next to that being forgiven seems quite the nicest thing. . . . You do forgive me, don't you, Frank?"

The rays of a setting sun, faint purple and gold, filtered through the curtains, and fell over her as she stood looking up at him. He was extremely conscious now of the new glow she irradiated. She appeared so little, so helpless, so frail. Even as with the thought of the ugly scandal, incongruous to all this dainty charm, his erstwhile rancor sought again to establish itself, a feeling almost of tenderness replaced it, a nascent propensity to petting, coddling, pampering, to patting the smooth cheeks white as with the pallor of undeserved sorrow.

"Only the fact," he answered gently, "that, as you say, forgiveness seems such a comfortable quality in the springtime—only that fact prevents me from saying that there's nothing to forgive, little Christine."

Advancing closer, again she lifted her

face, all candor and ingenuousness, and wide-open brown eyes.

"Fancy, Frank," she fluttered, "can you quite grasp it? I'm a *that*-woman now, a neatly labelled, indelibly branded, eternally damned *that*-woman! Isn't it appalling? And, more, I rather like the rôle. Isn't that appalling, too?"

In answer he frowned, not because hypocritical squeamishness precluded him from expressing openly the pleasure at the change in her he clandestinely felt, but because her whispered words seemed clangorously to summon forth a certain presence, an image of sleek, puffy, bleary-eyed grossness, a vision of the late A. J. Moran.

"So you are cross, after all."

Lips drooped, eyes fell. She sighed deeply. And watching her in silence, the well-tempered transition from bright tranquillity to sadness impressed him as perhaps a trifle too smoothly conducted entirely to indicate spontaneity. He recalled how an aptness for just such deft modulations had been her chief asset as an actress, and wondered whether some measure of the artifice which had given her on the stage so telling an effect of guilelessness lay behind her air of simplicity now. Alert, he awaited her next move—and knew not whether to gasp in admiration, or retract his suspicion as groundless, when slowly she lifted her hands and removed her hat.

For, with the action, she presented a figure even more winning and full of appeal. A mass of raven silkiness crowned her head that seemed far too heavy for the long, slender throat and little head held so proudly aloft. She looked dauntless now, and fragile, and greatly oppressed by unmerited burdens, borne, however, unflinchingly, in a manner which made for tender commiseration from any who looked, as Pell was looking, into the big, sad eyes. It came to him with all the force of an astounding revelation that he had condemned her unjustly. Her wisfulness, her pearls, and laces, and black gown, the delicate veins at her temples, and along attenuated wrists, the very suggestion

of bones about her neck, all awakened in him a profound respect as toward a mignon *haut-mondaine*, a great lady in miniature.

She brightened as again without a word he smiled, and turned to the table where a silver service was spread invitingly.

"Now I think I'll serve tea. Have you any rum, Frank? You know *that*-women always put rum in their tea. I don't like it overmuch, but something's lacking to the *that*-woman atmosphere, and incense makes me ill, while cigarettes hurt my throat."

Drawing the chair placed at the opposite side of the table beside hers, he answered:

"Juxtaposition is *that*-womanly, too. Don't you think, Christine, that if we sit in shockingly close proximity, we may dispense with the rum neither of us cares for?"

He watched for the dimple, but instead she lowered her eyes, and concurred gravely:

"I think we may, Frank. And, at any rate, if after a while we find the situation lacking in—well, in complexity, and intensity, and strained suspense and things—aren't they supposed to follow in the wake of the *that*-woman?—why, we can always fetch the rum, can't we?"

"Always." In somewhat pleased expectancy he lolled beside her, nonchalantly awaiting her next procedure, dubious as to whether it would be as intrinsically unpremeditated as she would make it seem.

Like a happy little girl arranging a doll's party she busied herself with the tea things. She appeared engrossed in the process . . . and of a sudden treated him to another lightning-like transition. The spoons in her hand clattered to the floor, and she turned to him a countenance bedewed with tears.

"Oh, Frank, whatever are you going to do. You shouldn't be so nice, you should—should flay me a little. I'm nasty and vile! I'm just like a common, ordinary, every day vampire wom-

an! I've ruined your career! Whatever, ever, in the world are you going to do now, poor dear?"

Her little hands fluttered helplessly in the air. The woebegone face brought so close to his quickened within him a sense of compassion, of guardianage and proprietorship, which impelled him caressingly to enfold her hands in one of his, to attempt, with the other, a pat of the wet cheek.

But she drew quickly away. "There's no use trying to comfort me. There's no use being magnanimous. The harm's done. Here you've been making such lots of money with these plays I've been starring in, and spending it all—and now your income's suddenly stopped. Kohler won't renew my contract at half the salary, and he's right. My following's gone. My old maids, and young girls, and genteel mammas, and ministers, and school teachers and things have deserted me once and for all. How can I go on playing virtue triumphant when every newspaper in the country has me branded an emblem of vice victorious? How can I go on as innocence disarming sin when they've steeped me in scarlet from head to toe? Your pretty little formula—it's of no use now. I—I've smashed everything for you, and I'm so sorry, and whatever are you going to do?"

"Lots of things may be done, Christine." Despite the fact that the situation presented undeniable difficulties, he smiled reassuringly into her tear-laden eyes. "I can twist the formula about a bit, make my heroine a harum-scarum hoyden, have her employ tomboy tactics to reform the villain, and serve up a concoction exactly to the taste of—well, Bettina Lea's adherents, for instance."

In faint displeasure she lifted her eyebrows. "Frank Pell, how can you even suggest it? Bettina Lea speaks with a Western twang. I won't have you writing for her!"

"Well, make her pale, pink and spiritual then. Why not work the formula into one of the sugary messes that have made Marian Lester popular?"

She frowned impatiently. "Marian

Lester has tried to steal my melancholy note, and made a dreadful fizzle of it. She fancies herself most awfully dainty, and aristocratic, and Fragonard— and she has thick ankles. I won't have you writing for her. In fact, I won't have you writing for anyone but me, Frank." With a quick dab of her handkerchief, all traces of tears were mysteriously eradicated. Tranquil again, she turned to the tea things.

"Then, Christine," he asked, "since very emphatically I'm on the point of going high and dry, and since with some modulations the formula has yet to outlive its usefulness, and you dismiss my facile suggestions with such scorn, just what have you to offer in place of them?"

"Oh, a solution." From over her teacup steadily her glance met his. "Of course there's a solution. In the gathering twilight of a day like this there's always a solution to everything. Springtime—in the mountains . . . have you ever—" He noticed that her voice fell, and her eyes wavered just as they had a little while before at the same words.

"But the ultimate solution can wait," she proceeded after a pause. "Now, since I won't consider your writing for anyone else, supposing—supposing . . . how about building up another following for me? A Broadwayish crowd? How about letting me go in for demure naughtiness? You know the big scene according to the formula between me and the villain; you know how you worked my dimple into it. He has the stage. I enter lower left all innocent and unafeard, profile with the dimple to audience. Then the temptation scene—Scarpia attack—run across stage—and denunciation at lower right, profile without the dimple to audience. Then the overthrow of vice—I upstage at centre winsomely forgiving him while the electrician pours God's sunshine through passionate purple curtains in the background, in subtle token of the benign influence of innocence and everything—you know?"

He nodded.

She set down her cup, and went on

eagerly: "Well then, just topsy-turvy that scene; make it a broad farce, more broad than farcical. It won't require much time or energy, for if you took the trouble to make it clever the vice exterminators would be after you, but they swallow vulgarity easily when it's purged of intellect. Make it go this way: Villain has the stage. I enter lower right woebegone and distraught, profile sans dimple to audience. Then the temptation scene—thwarted Scarpia—and denunciation at lower left, dimple to audience, and very much in evidence—you see? 'Death rather' with a snicker. Oh, it will take! Then I go upstage centre, and at the finish we'll give 'em the big surprise they hanker for. He'll turn out to have been my husband right along, and they'll be soothed to find it all quite properly improper, and in the boudoir background, from under rose-colored shades, the devil's own candlelight will flare. You might call it 'The Escape of an Ingénue,' or 'The Débutante Delivered,' and if only you strip it of any stray ray of intelligence, and make it messy, and spread a little sugariness over it at the end—why, it will be a tremendous hit, the reformers won't howl, and the censor'll even pass it for the movies!"

As she ceased speaking, she leaned her elbows on the arm of his chair, pillow'd her head in her hands, and brought a little face far more exhilarant than he had ever seen it before to within a short distance of his. That the unusual fire in her eyes, and the slight flush in her cheeks were outward signs of some undercurrent of thought either adroitly restrained, or withheld, through timidity, from expression, only enhanced, as from moment to moment he became more cognizant of it, a wonder, a pleasure at this florescence she exhaled, and a keen curiosity as to what it was all leading to. This impression he received of a wavering dilatoriness behind her every light word—was it prompted on her part by generalship, or mere fluctuant indecision?

"But, Christine," he commented,

after a silence, "a Western twang or thick ankles would be far less consequential obstacles to contend with than those you suggest. Catering with banalities to the sentimentality of the American public fosters an agreeable feeling of condescension. But the very fact of being able to meet, with devitalized obscenities, the requirements of the unmasked Puritan soul would, I'm afraid, destroy a comfortable illusion of alien superiority I've hitherto cherished. And so—"

"I know," she interrupted solemnly. "It wouldn't be a solution at all. The only solution, of course—but that can wait. . . . How, Frank, would it be to make me a horrid example, a wages-of-sin heroine? First act, country girl; second act, furnished room; third act, wine, roses, jewels, illicit joys; fourth act—river? A tingling, shivering Sapho effect in the second act—wouldn't it be feasible? A five-foot, ninety-pound Sapho with the dimple carefully concealed? For to transgressors dimples are banned. A smile of positive enjoyment is the one unpardonable sin."

Her eyes had become so inviting by now that, leaning toward her, non-committally he took her hand. "I'm afraid I shouldn't care entirely to obliterate that dimple, Christine. I'm a bit pernicious both to dimples and transgression, and that the two may blend felicitously you're making me believe."

Very lightly she laid her other hand on his. "Couldn't we make it a sort of play within a play? They're popular now. Off stage couldn't you and I be acting a comedy called, say, 'The Transgressor Transgressed.' And while I was saphoing away for all I was worth, couldn't you watch the profile with the dimple from behind the scenes—and wink? How'd that be?"

"Excellent."

"Oh, but it wouldn't," she retorted quickly, "seriously, I mean. It would be far too degrading a concession to public morals. Concessions must be gracious, condescending, and never obsequiously made. Concessions—"

She stopped, puzzled, when abruptly

he dropped her hands and moved away. By some obscure process of ideation, her words brought the thought of the concessions, franchises and ordinances that had made A. J. Moran infamous. Into his consciousness there loomed again, ominous and revolting, the image as of an immense smugness. Formidable in its hugeness, repellent in its cheap squalor, it seemed to cast a shadow of proprietorship over the little figure beside him, to sneer, "Have her if you like, but acknowledge my ameliorative influence, or your ideas of *meum* and *tuum* are hazy."

She was frowning, nonplussed at the look of disdain on his handsome face, and, as their eyes met, he experienced a passing regret and rebellion. He longed intensely to have back again the shy, virginal girl devoid of ardor and sophistication, whom he had known ages ago as it now seemed, the girl who, it struck him oddly, had been at once the prototype and direct antithesis of this spiritual-mouthed, sensuous-eyed woman.

She appeared to read his thoughts. "Am I then so different—so irretrievably spoilt, Frank?"

"Well," he answered at length, considering her quizzically, unable deliberately to be unkind in the face of her appealingness, "you are different—yes. You've disclosed an amative flair hitherto unsuspected, inviting in its promise of finesse, questionable in this very promise, which implies, I fear, a dearth of the tyro's zeal."

"Ah, but I retain enthusiasm as I acquire technique." The dimple appeared and vanished in her smile's fulguration. And, intimidated by the stately serenity which at once succeeded it, he hesitated whether to meet this invitation almost brazen in its direction, or to await another even less circuitous.

By now the sun had set. A color note of faint, luminous gray immersed the room in an atmosphere of softness and still joy. She heaved a deep, tranquil sigh; her lips parted; and, a little wearily, her eyes closed. He

thought that she had never appeared so lovely as now, in her dreamy abstraction. Now, as never before, despite the noxious affair which adhered so firmly to his memory, he felt her *sympatica*; he felt a *rapport*, a kindred something between them. Contemplating her, he thought of Ronsard couplets and Watteau gardens, of scarfs, crinolines, flowered draperies, plumed fans, of dainty minuets and stately gavottes, of dusk, and moonbeams, and theplash of fountains, and the scent of mignonette.

"Springtime . . . in the mountains . . . the solution. . . ."

Slowly her eyes opened, and fixed themselves straight before her, with an expression of determination which told him that matters were approaching a critical juncture, and that in a moment he would know what it was that had given the effect of hesitant procrastination to everything she had thus far said. For an instant she appeared to lack courage to proceed—then took a deep breath, clenched her hands, and went on in a quick whisper.

"There's a lake on the flat summit of a mountain. It seems the highest place in the world, and the most beautiful, and the happiest. I've a place there—a little white villa, and there aren't any other houses around for miles, and it's only a few hours' journey from the city. It's so lovely there in May. I'm going to have a week-end party. Will you come?"

She gave him no time to reply. "A perfectly genteel house party, with a duenna, and a bosom friend, and a man I elude, and a man who eludes me. Will you come?"

"The other guests?" he questioned after a pause, smiling into the eager little face.

"No other guests—only you!"

She waited for him to assimilate this, flushed brightly at the astonishment on his face, and perched herself on the arm of his chair. "You're the duenna *de luxe* when you frown, and look disdainful; you're like a bosom friend when you disapprove of me so politely

and so magnanimously; and when you blush you're the man I must elude—for no one's more dangerous than the man who, at thirty, still blushes—and you're the man who eludes me when you begin to make love. Will you come, Frank, dear, to my week-end party?"

A passing aversion to the idea of conducting an affair of gallantry on what was in all probability the scene of her clandestine rendezvous with A. J. Moran was completely overthrown by the sight of her standing timid, almost beseeching, before him, emittent, it struck him, of a propensity to cling very prettily, and not too closely, and for not too long. He slipped an arm about her, and drew her to him.

"Of course I'll come, dear. But you say I elude you when I begin to make love. Meaning—

"Meaning . . . oh, nothing at all!" Her eyes fell, her hands trembled in his. A wave of tenderness suddenly swept over him. She was so winsome a siren. All her failings faded now to the proportion of trifling peccadillos. Stirred, he drew her closer—

And was first astonished by an unexpected rigidity and withdrawal on her part, then dumbfounded and thunderstruck at the whisper which attacked his ears with the shock of a sudden din!

"Meaning just this . . . I'm fond of you, Frank. Why not marry me?"

When, a week ago, he had considered her as a suitable life partner, any thought of connecting her with the idea of affairs illicit would have struck him in the nature of an unspeakable insult. But now his antipathy to her proposition was founded not so much upon the fact that her cheap intrigue had rendered her unfit for the offices of wifehood, as upon a vast disappointment on his part. Her words, delivered, for all their softness with the finality of a ukase, seemed outrageous, the quick mental jerk by which they turned him from roseate fancies to a consideration of the dull stabilities of matrimony, an indignity heaped, by herself, upon herself. It was as if, merely to exploit a

coronet before the world, she demanded one set with paste jewels, in lieu of a single gem of purest lustre. He felt himself hopelessly disillusioned, and held up to ridicule. And the feeling intensified when, upon meeting her eyes, he saw that she was laughing silently, irrepressibly, whole-heartedly, as it seemed.

"My poor Frank! Don't look so aghast—it's anything but complimentary," she rippled, after a pause he found disconcerting; "and don't look so distressed. You'd rather not marry me? Very good. It's a bit disappointing, but of no particular consequence. Only . . . for us respectability would be such a thrillingly immoral thing! Domesticity so entralling! The science of human duty so fascinating! To introduce into the married state the taste, breeding, elegance and polish associated only with a few felicitous affairs beyond the pale—to make a concession to the thick-headed nonentities, grant their demand for legitimized bliss, but in their faces to return the color and fragrance of things, and upon a foundation like ours, so contrary to their precepts, so at odds with all ethics—wouldn't it be—well, good fun? Doesn't it tempt you?"

Confused, he rose and paced the floor. To a great extent her proposition repelled him. And yet it seemed to imply so complete an abjuration as almost to efface the memory of her degrading association, as almost to stir him to awe . . . and besides, her appeal was so tremendous.

"Do you mean, dear," he asked, finally facing her, "that, for me, you'll actually refuse the filthy bequest—give up all that money, and everything it would make possible for you?"

"Good heavens, no!" she gasped. "I mean nothing of the kind, Frank Pell!"

As if a pernicious influence were thus manifesting its power over her, suddenly all the dreamy sweetness was swept from her face. Mouth and eyes hardened. Her voice assumed a steely timbre. With assurance, with emphasis, with effrontery even, she continued:

"You're so tiresome, Frank. Why not be sensible? My old A. J. has left me lots of money. I'm rich. For months you've been thinking about marrying me. I could see that. Today, when you were afraid you'd find me cheapened and unattractive, you were surprised to find me vastly improved. I could see that, too. You're fond of me: I'm fond of you. We're neither of us doers, achievers; we're both lazy, and both—well, somewhat monogamous, too. You were a poor sort of playwright: I was a poor sort of actress. Neither of us cared for our job. For both, our life-work was no more than a means of wresting a living from the world. Well, I've been given a splendid living for the two of us. You like leisure, luxury, travel, splendid homes and all—and so do I. Now we can have them. Old A. J. has arranged everything beautifully. Old A. J.—"

"If you'll oblige me," he broke in vehemently, a surge of indignation em purpling his face, "by not offering me any such sinecure, and by ceasing to prate about your old A. J. and that shamelessly murky affair, I'll be more likely to accredit you with just a touch of the taste, and breeding, and elegance, and polish you were vaunting a minute ago so highly. Your old A. J.—"

"Don't dare to sneer at my old A. J.!"

He fell back in astonishment as she leaped to her feet and beat with her tiny fists upon the table. Her breast heaved. Her lips blanched and twisted themselves almost into a snarl. The delicate veins at her temple bulged threateningly. Looking down at her, he had an odd sensation of being towed over. In her fury there was something august.

"I was crazy about him!"

The words, so ludicrously commonplace, only magnified an effect almost of majesty. "I was crazy about him, I tell you, Frank Pell!"

Through the succeeding silence he watched the outer evidences of readjustment, as the twisted lips became

normal again and the swollen veins sank.

Without a word, she turned at last, put on her hat and gloves, and walked, stately and loftily offended, to the door. Her hand was on the knob when he received a culminating jolt in the form of her smile's sunny gleam. Over her shoulder softly she called:

"I'll write from up in the mountains and tell you how to get there and when to start. . . . You'll be there! Don't start to shake your head and look contemptuous. If the week-end isn't to be a honeymoon, well and good. But you'll come!"

III

ONE morning, a week later, Pell found himself gazing meditatively at an unopened letter stamped with the name of an obscure village, addressed in a fine hand he recognized at once. There were troubled creases on his forehead, a touch of sallowness on his fair skin. The memory of her last words, called so softly over her shoulder, persisted, distracted, obtruded; enticed with their promise of halcyon hours; quickened, with their challenge, an inclination for mock tourney against an adversary whose agility bespoke deft sword play, but with points blunted and edges dulled; and yet antagonized him by their suggestion of tranquil assurance that eventually her aim would be attained. To him this assurance hinged upon arrogance directly incurred, he felt, from the influence, malignant and all-pervasive, of A. J. Moran.

Many times, in these intervening days, it had struck him that Moran was the chief figure in the situation, the pivot about which Christine and he rotated, in circles each moment of smaller compass. The man's crude strength seemed to him never to have exerted itself so forcibly as now, upon the gravitation of a budding romance. Nor was it merely the poisoning of this romance which embittered. Vaguely he felt a foreboding as of vast demoralization, an impending upheaval of every prin-

ciple, every instinct, every standard whereby he had hitherto gauged his values.

A week ago he had met a new Christine, warmed, enriched, subtilized. By contact with a crassness at odds with all his inherent fastidiousness? he could but ask himself. Then, too, nothing other than this new glow she irradiated had prompted her to the proposal that, since she had divested him of a living, he share with her a bounty gleaned from Moran. And yet more astounding, he was forced to admit that when, after his denunciation, she flamed into her vulgar "I was crazy about him," he had fallen back before the high degree of majesty in her manner—had seen the ameliorative transformation at its acme. With its complexities, the situation aroused a hazy dread. In the presence of her living appeal there was no knowing to what extent he might succumb. Cheap and sordid though the episode was, nevertheless, for him it had taken on immense proportions.

When finally he tore open the envelope and found a note ending, as had her discourse, with a confident "You will come," it occurred to him that it might be her intention satisfactorily to explain A. J. Moran. The one thing above all else that he felt he must steer clear of was any such justification. He determined that by no means would he go. . . .

And when they were finishing dinner on the last evening of the week-end, he felt an uneasy but overwhelming desire for the justification, not that as a spouse he might consider her in a favorable light—wedlock in all its banality had become a thing immeasurably remote by now—but so as totally to strip of any stigma an affair agreeable as none other had hitherto been. All pearls, and daintiness, and ivory-tinted lace, in silence she was looking into his eyes. Emphatically he was there.

At the eleventh hour he had decided that to forego the visit would be senseless. If it were still her design neatly to entrap him, he would show a resist-

ance adequate to the emergency. So why renounce the joys of an evanescent romance? With his decision, despondency vanished in a trice. He remembered in what a spirit of gay adventure he had taken the train, how long the journey had been, with what still suspense the evening air seemed laden when finally he alighted at a dingy little depot among gently rolling hills, with but one or two rickety farm-houses in the distance, and awaiting him, in a barouche, her out-of-date note enhanced as never before by the old-fashioned vehicle, jet-black horses, and low-voiced attendants—Christine. He remembered how as part of a dream the pure little profile beside him had appeared each time he turned to it. He remembered how fraught with the spirit of romance, after the long climb up the mountain-side, the sight at the summit, flat and broad like a plateau, of the crystalline lakelet so unexpectedly there, of the white villa with its smooth lawns and rose bushes, had been—and, a moment later, when together they entered the rooms, furnished exquisitely and lighted, through orchid-tinted shades, by lamps of old and tasteful design. From that evening until now, when he found himself sitting in the gathering dusk of his last day, he had felt under a spell of bygone days, like a happy figure in some love-tale of long ago.

They were seated at a table placed before French windows that opened upon a terrace, and beyond it, upon a vista of sweeping hills gathered by the twilight into a single tone of lulling gray and ensconced cozily, as it seemed, beneath that early evening sky which, with its deep, still blue, endears itself to lovers. On the table ices were melting, untouched. They had made but a pretense of eating. With the fanning of a breeze redolent as with the sighs of drowsy roses, a note of regret that to-morrow this firstness of things would be done with stole over them.

Why was it, he wondered, that at this tranquil hour the image of the dead man, who had provided her with all

this, again should obtrude? Why did he feel a sudden, troubous hankering for the satisfactory explanation, the complete extenuation? Was she reading his thoughts, seeking to allay his doubts, when presently her smile gleamed so reassuringly? She leaned across the table and he felt her fingers close tightly over his. With a touch of austerity in their limpid depths, steadily her eyes met his. A little dread mingled with his desire as he realized the moment of explanation at hand.

"The blessed saints!" The abrupt irrelevance of her whisper gave him another jolt. "That was the one expression he retained from peasant ancestry, and reserved only for highest eulogy. And that's what he said once when he sat finishing dinner and the sky—just such a sky as this—struck him as beautiful. He'd gasp, his mouth would fall wide open after he said it, and the funny, fat jaw would hang so foolishly and so helplessly. We'd been having ices, too, and I remember how a drop of cream zig-zagged down his double chin as he spoke, and fell on the immaculate lemon-colored waistcoat. He was proud of those waistcoats, and I remember thinking that only a profound emotion could have caused him to let a stain settle there. You see—or don't you see?—everything he did was so appropriate. It was appropriate that he should look like a fat imbecile when he paid tribute to that sky. For he sensed its beauty. In his dull, stammering way he sensed the charm of everything beautiful, Frank."

She rose, went over to him, and pressed her cheek against his as she went on:

"And he said just that, dear—just gasped 'The blessed saints!'—when he first saw me. The words thrilled me, for the—the way, the silly way he said them—it was homage I'd never had before, and have never had since. You can understand—or can't you?—how stirring it must be for a woman to receive such homage from a man immeasurably bigger than she?"

In spite of himself, half ashamed of himself, he frowned. The image floating as ever so persistently before him resolved itself now into a mammoth chin down which a colossal drop of cream rolled. He resented this new element of grim grotesquery in the situation, while what seemed so deliberate a self-abasement on her part, moved him to displeasure.

"Come, Frank." With a faint sigh she drew him from his chair. He saw that for the nonce she had dismissed the topic as unpropitious, and smiled in relief. With his arm about her, they walked into a room which seemed to him exactly to mirror her personality. In it he imagined her the dainty châtelaine of a diminutive chateau.

It was hung in flowered silk draperies. An Aubusson carpet lay under their feet. Clusters of moss roses blended their soft hues with the lights diffused from the orchid-colored lamp shades. A Ming statuette, a Tanagra figurine, bits of majolica and Sèvres stood about. The chaise-longue in which she curled herself so gracefully seemed incomplete without her. He thought that the one thing lacking was a spinet. And the view through open windows of smooth lawn and marble fountain made him wish that outside a sedan chair were awaiting her.

On the walls there hung only one painting, a Boucher, and before it she halted. Again he saw a determined look in her eyes. Again the little fingers closed firmly over his.

"He bought art, Frank"—she spoke in the intense whisper he had come almost to fear, so eloquent and convincing did it render her words—"as he bought votes, with an unerring business instinct. He demanded the best, paid the highest price, and his business sense told him how every time to negotiate a good bargain. He thought me worth millions, and a good bargain at that. Well, hearts and lives and careers are offered a woman so much oftener than sound cash. And I tell you, Frank Pell, there's something tremendously soul-satisfying in the idea of just that—

a high cash value! Once, at his office, I watched the people working under him. They all cringed before him, and were proud of their cringing. And now I cringe before his memory, and I'm proud of having belonged to him. I liked everything about him. I liked his trickiness, and his shifty deals, and his low cunning. I liked the gutters, the saloons he began with. I liked his smugness, and sleekness, and puffiness. I liked the fishy eyes. The very reek of bay rum in his hair I found entralling! And oh, Frank, how dear to me the lemon-colored spats and waistcoats were! They were all part of his sense of the fitness of things, part of his terrible strength, and part of the immense sadness behind it. He couldn't have acted his part in unobtrusive tweeds. They wouldn't have accorded with the rôle assigned him. Always he looked the clown, and played the giant, and was . . . the visionary . . . a sort of rough-and-tumble court jester, with an ache in his heart, and the kings and counsellors well under his thumb. Wily bank presidents, high government officials, all-powerful capitalists even, quailed before him. But before that sky out there, before this picture . . . and before me . . . he quailed, and gasped his 'The blessed saints!' with so much wonder, and as much awe, and a sort of—of frightened silliness as well." . . .

While she spoke, her voice had risen steadily—and sank now to a murmur that was like a caress, as she lifted her lips.

"Let's go out on the terrace, dear, and watch for the evening star."

For all its eloquence, her outburst had left misgivings in its train. Now, however, that again she clung to him, they were set at rest. And he reflected, as together they passed out under the open sky, how perilous for him must be a charm potent to divest of sordidness such revelations as hers, and to still his doubts so effectively with the caress of white arms and soft lips.

Fundamentally, he continued to reflect, this whole affair was no more than

an ordinary, twentieth-century occurrence, perhaps a little more evilly squalid than others of its ilk: a stage ingénue acclaimed for her impeccability, had been publicly exposed as the paramour of an exceptionally infamous boss politician, and, adopting the ethical standards of her class, she urged her lover to subsist with her on the spoil of the liaison, a proposition which a spark of inherent decency on his part made impossible. Just so, in bald candor, the situation presented itself. And yet . . . the old-world spell which hung over them here seemed to sweep away all tarnish; here, far from the city, with its meannesses and its slanders, she became the little lady of his destiny, and his mind was at rest. . . .

The hills had become lost by now in one dominant note of dim, still blue. The silence was unbroken. From the garden below, dew-laden roses sent a faint perfume. In the valley a light appeared; above them, the evening star. For the moment his thoughts passed to other things, and presently he spoke:

"Stripped of its inhabitants, this America wouldn't be such a bad place after all. If only those first settlers had marched in to the tune of a drinking song, rather than with their hymns! Can you imagine anything less congruous than a circle of Puritans chanting 'The Lord is My Shepherd' on such a night as this? They landed minus three essential adjuncts to the upbuilding of a worthy nation—mirrors, modistes, and mistresses. And when finally they brought them here it was too late; the reign of the harpy help-mate was on."

Night was settling by now. Another light appeared in the valley. Overhead, another star twinkled into life. Her head on his shoulder, he continued to muse:

"And now I wonder—is the trend absolutely hopeless? The suffrage thing, is it as calamitous as it appears? There's another side to this emancipation of woman idea. Down-trodden Aspasia have been waiting too long for exemption from dowdy precedence, and harridan rule. They've become restive.

A little leeway to the petticoats, and wouldn't the silks come to the fore, and the flannels be stamped out of power? A woman President for these august states—for my part I can't see anything particularly novel in the idea. And what if the first actual first lady of the land were to turn out another Kate of Russia, say, another latter-day Semiramis, of whom another Voltaire shall say, 'Light comes at last from the West'? Or again, why mayn't it be leading to the day when on the banks of the Potomac another Maintenon shall be installed in another Trianon? Or again—"

"The blessed saints!" He caught a fleeting glimpse of the dimple as she broke in. "But you two are alike, Frank—you and my old A. J. It's weird and eerie, for would you believe that one night he said exactly what you've just said—in other words, of course. I think he phrased it, 'The day'll come when there'll be another of those pretty Louis something rats in a wing of the White House.' . . . Both of you romantics, both of you visionaries who can't grasp that democracy in itself implies harridan rule and harridan worship. It's uncanny how each moment I realize more and more that you two are as one!"

His arm fell from about her shoulder as he listened. Biting his lips, in vexation he drew a little away. But the light of determination shone in her eyes now as never before. Once again he looked down at her, and experienced the curious sensation of being towered over. Without a word, she stood facing him in dead silence for some time. And when at last her lips parted, he felt a moment's dread. It was as if a half-closed flower were about to open completely, petal by petal, and he wondered whether at the heart there would be revealed a dew-drop or a canker-worm.

"Both of you dreamers and do-nothings," she proceeded at last, "and both of you precursors, perhaps, of a future American aristocracy. He came of the very lowliest; you have upon you the stamp of generations of patricians.

There's a kinship between the genuinely lowly, and the genuinely exaltate. There are as few of one as the other; together they make only an infinitesimal fraction of the hordes; but among them are the mighty of the earth, and between them—the Philistines."

Her voice had become rapt, and, listening, it struck him like the voice of someone in a trance, unconsciously made the mouthpiece and instrument of an invisible influence at work.

"You were a third-rate playwright," she went on, "I was a third-rate actress, and he—though you mayn't have realized it, was a third-rate business man. He left a fifteen-million-dollar art collection, and five millions to me, but he could have left many times that but for a fine disdain of his job. The three of us were all mummers playing crazy parts that didn't interest us, all luxury-loving do-nothings, but a new, American species of luxury-loving do-nothing that could only have sprung up here in America. To all of us our work was the most inconsequential of side issues. With a great deal of condescension, and not too much energy, you gave the masses what they wanted, and made an excellent living out of it—and so did I—and so, in a bigger way, did he. . . . How alike!"

As if to wrest himself from under a malignant spell, abruptly he cut in:

"I see no likeness."

"I question that!"

Cold and hard as her voice, her eyes met him squarely, and before them his shifted uneasily at last.

"Like him, but not as big as he . . . and perhaps that's why I love you so much more!" With a quick sob, all the chill gone as suddenly as it had come, she flung her arms about his neck. "Won't you understand, dear? There's been so much prating about rascals who are rascals on a big scale, so much bальderdash about big thieves, big rogues, big scoundrels. Well, he did the petty, mean, low things, and turned them into monumental deeds by the magnificent detachedness with which he did them! They served his purpose—well and

good. Let the moralists howl! Could anything be more like meanness made sublime than the way he exposed me, for instance? I wanted our affair secret, and he agreed. But, for all his veneration, with that legacy he put me in my place, and forced a public receipt for value received. And wasn't that will a superb defiance flung in the faces of the Pharisees? The art collection he left—it shows them that, while he got from them what he wanted by giving them what they wanted, now, at the finish, he's giving them back what he took, but in the form of what he wanted, and what they neither want nor understand. . . . Won't you let all the difficulties smooth themselves away, dear? And be happy—with me? And see that, after all, my solution—his solution—is the best and only solution? Won't you admit that he was consummately colossal? That there was the same artistry in everything he did as in what he's doing now? For it's he that's changed me, and made me see things—that my solution is the only one, and how much I care for you . . . And it's he that's urging me to urge you to take his money, and his woman, and be happy, Frank" . . .

Tear-laden eyes looked beseechingly into his. Suddenly it struck him that all her frail helplessness was a deceptive thing, a fetter, cunningly wrought, of which he must free himself at once, or never at all. The little arms clung even more closely. He raised his hands to loose them, as if thus to disenthral himself from an evil charm.

"Take care, Frank Pell!" her voice rang out in warning, "Don't be too sure that the instincts of an honorable gentleman are ruling you now. Don't be too sure that there's not a grain or two of non-conformist squeamishness at work at last!"

Above them, one vast, ungainly cloud sprawled among the myriad stars, enhancing, in some impalpable fashion, by its very clumsiness, the beauty of the evening sky. He thought, as he noticed it, that there was something symbolic about it, something at one with

the raucous hoot of an owl in the distance, which broke softly into the silence, and died rather melodiously away—at one with the sight of a bat that flitted by them as with an unwonted grace, and brought its pointed wings in charming silhouette against the deep blue overhead. He felt himself falling under the power of a grisly, awesome spirit brooding over them now, and impelling him to surrender. He felt about him—in the cloud, the owl's cry, the bat, in her discourse and importunities, in this whole affair, an apotheosization of the hideous. He was hearing, from every side, a cacophonous siren-song, breath-bereavingly sweet in its very dissonance, . . . and, all the while, her arms clung so tenderly. . . .

Against this, over and over again, as the moments flew by, he reviewed, in his mind's eye, the incident in its sodden aspect, and sought thus to quell the strange tumult, and overcome the power of the spell.

Now all the fluency that had made her appear but the mouthpiece of some unseen force, left her words. In little sobs they reached him, disjointed, confused with the persistent "sodden—sodden" of his ulterior reflections.

"After all—remember—it's only because I care so much . . . and you care, too—forget A. J. . . . forget, dear . . . I'm so terribly, terribly fond of . . . why not marry—"

"Can't do it, Christine!"

The words were blurted out in a puerile gulp. But they rang with finality and he felt himself free from the spell.

In her faint gasp he heard unqualified acceptance of defeat. The little body drooped, and then swayed very slightly. The lips forced themselves into an ineffectual attempt at a smile. For a long time neither spoke. But when finally he sought clumsily for words of assuagement, he saw the dimple break out in ultimate triumph, and it was she who comforted:

"It's quite all right. Don't look unhappy, Frank. I was probably wrong. And, at any rate, we'll never, never

speak of it again. Such an evening as this—our last, too, for the time being—such an evening isn't to be wasted in dull argument and expostulation, is it, dear?"

And she lifted her lips.

IV

"You don't mind if I fail to speed the 'parting guest? I hate good-byes."

She had surprised him with these words after a late tea on the following day. And an hour later, when he was completing his packing, it occurred to him how steeped in emotion, and yet devoid of any outward manifestations, the farewell had been. He remembered how he had merely drawn her to him, and held her so for a moment, how he had kissed her quietly, without a lingering or tremor on either side—how he had met, with a half-hearted smile, the quick flash of dimple and little white teeth, so at odds with the shadows beneath her eyes.

"Good-bye—and thank you, Christine. . . . It's been lovely."

"Good-bye, and thank you," her whisper had echoed, "it's been very, very lovely, Frank."

A hint from him that he tarry a day or two longer, she had dismissed that morning as inauspicious. "It was to have been a week-end, and it's been such a beautiful, complete week-end. By to-morrow we may have outlived the spell." And this sense of completeness coupled itself with a sense of finality now, as, with a last, regretful glance about the room, its rose-colored hangings vivified by the vermillion rays of a setting sun, he took up his bag. They were to meet soon in the city; within a few days he would see her again. And yet he realized how futile it was to comfort himself with such thoughts, how irrevocably that first, faint flush of things would be gone, even as it shone with greater brilliance, even as it deepened to a steady glow.

That the very spirit of evanescence which hovered about this romance

just as a miasma of tedious enduringness had hung over former affairs, be-spoke something sweet and lasting in place of the disgust he had so often met with, everything about her, her gentleness, her fragile beauty, each sight of her, each word from her, gave, told him. But, with his return to the city so many distracting affairs would intrude. Above all else the question of a livelihood loomed. Keenly now he regretted past extravagances. The coffers were in sore need of replenishment. And he sought vainly for a solution as facile as hers, regretted, even, that for him her solution was impossible. For the image of the late Moran, hovering, as always, about the episode, dominating, in some obscure way, the situation, no longer stirred him to resentment. She had cleared herself. She had justified A. J. Moran. And she had failed completely to attain her end only because it involved a certain acceptance of fact, which, denuded of specious allure, could, he felt, be best expressed in the crude phraseology of A. J. Moran himself.

The rooms he passed through seemed, without her presence, stripped of all significance. The view of undulant hills immersed, as in fluid copper, looked vapid and trite when, a moment later, he stood before the waiting barouche. A pang of regret smote him. He felt a hazy fear that henceforth, without her, all things beautiful would lose half their charm. And there followed a yearning once again, before he left, to look into the big, gentle eyes, to see the lips, without a suggestion of reproach, flutter into their smile.

"How long before train time?"

The driver touched his hat. "Lots of time, sir. Needn't start for a good eight or ten minutes yet, sir."

He gave the man his bag, and started toward the lake. Instinctively he knew where to seek her. When he passed through the house, he felt too keenly its emptiness to search there for her now. His eye travelled along the edge of the lake, and fixed themselves finally upon a little copse on the further shore

which he recognized as one of her favorite nooks.

Hurrying toward it, he paused for a moment in tribute to the splendor of the scene. Now that he knew he would see her again, it lost its vapidity, became dazzling, left him spellbound. A single color note of flaming orange shot forth in triumph from the setting sun, and steeped the country as in a sea of effulgence. Sharply outlined against it in mirror black, the trees growing on the mountain top, the villa itself, seemed divested of reality, and but part of a gorgeous dream. Here, on this flat summit so much higher than the surrounding hills, with its pellucid lakelet and flowering lawns, he felt himself at the apex of existence. A distinct aversion to the idea of starting for the valley below, and travelling cityward in a dusty train, swept over him. . . . He knew, now, that in future all thoughts of her would link themselves with sunsets, and starlit nights, and mountain-tops, with gathering dusks and the first rosy glimmerings of dawn. And now, too, he felt that, as on the previous night, the romantic background had been in affiliation with her and her plea, so to-day this great golden resplendence was making a last, vehement protest against his decision. . . . The thought was unwelcome, and, frowning, he hurried on.

In the little copse he found her, seated among tall grasses, and looking, through interlaced, low boughs, into the sunset. She welcomed him with a smile that checked the words of explanation on his lips. Just as on the night before she had taken her defeat with the spirit of a thoroughbred, so now she met without protest his disregard of her wish that, at the last moment, there be no good-byes. He seated himself beside her, and drew her head to his shoulder. For a while they sat silent, and then there passed between them little commonplaces he found more fraught with feeling than the most lyrical outburst could have been.

"You must take care not to miss that train, Frank."

"The man says there's lots of time." A short pause, and then, "You'll be busy in the city?"

"Awfully."

"There'll be lots of things to plan, and get under way?"

"Lots of 'em."

"Parlous times ahead, aren't there, dear?"

"Devilish, Christine."

"And what's the solution to be? A rough-and-tumble farce for Bettina Lea, or a comedy of sentiment for Marian Lester?"

"Can't say now." His voice became a trifle flat as he answered. "I'm pretty thoroughly disgusted with this scrivening of tawdry plays—disgusted, and floundering, and all at sea, dear. This wretched sense of decency—why weren't you able completely to annihilate it? Why, will you tell me, does my very rejection of a proposition I still find singularly revolting make me feel at this moment altogether abject and ashamed before you?"

Her face fell at his words. "Don't, dear—I can't bear to have you unhappy. There's nothing to be unhappy about. What real difference does this marriage question make? Last night I was probably all awry with my pleas, and my protests. Once back in the city, I know you'll hit upon a satisfactory adjustment . . . and I know too, dear, that I'm tremendously happy, and that I've the most splendid lover woman ever dreamed in vain of having."

There followed another moment of silence.

"I'll have to hurry to catch that train," he said at length.

"You'll have to hurry," came her antiphonal echo.

"Melancholy affairs, partings, aren't they?"

"Melancholy affairs. . . ."

"I'll miss you, little Christine."

"I'll miss you. . . ."

Still he made no move to leave her. Through spaces between the boughs, they continued to look into the sunset, where luminous pinks and violets were now mingling with the gold. A bud-

ding leaf of virginal green touched ever so lightly the curve of her cheek. . . . And in a flash it came to him that there was something hymeneal in the atmosphere. He dismissed the thought as absurd, smiled at it—and yet, in the stillness unbroken by so much as the buzz of an insect, or the stirring of a twig, he felt as if a protest were being made in the form of a great, silent epithalamium. . . . Without a word, without a caress, without so much as a parting glance he sprang to his feet. . . .

And just then, clamorous and strident with the conclusiveness of an edict from which there was no appeal, he heard the voice of A. J. Moran.

Just then, clamorous and strident with the conclusiveness of an edict from which there was no appeal, he heard the whistle of a locomotive in the valley below.

The sound broke into the majestic stillness as if in scorn of its awesomeness—and then sank into humility as it died away. And, to Pell's ears, it was as the voice of a great, grotesque incongruity screaming its disparagement of his niceties, only to fade into abasement before this spectacle of human trouble, and perplexities, and ignorance in their very triteness tremendous. And to him this abasement implied a great, clumsy understanding which swayed him far more than had Christine's pleas, far more than had her loveliness, and the spell of sun and stars. He was well aware that the unreality of the last three days had aroused him almost to a morbid pitch. And it was because of this, because this final argument addressed itself to sound judgment as well as to sensibilities, because it brought him down to earth that he found himself succumbing before it. For the voice cried: "To hell with your fine notions. Marry your girl and be done with it," and cried with such a crude, kindly omniscience behind it as to proclaim the battle over—

"And another ikon smashed." White-faced, he capitulated.

Very quietly she came over to him, and slipped an arm through his. For a long time neither spoke, while before them the radiance melted into fainter shades, and over them there stole the first breath of evening coolness. At last he felt a tremor in her arm. Inquiringly he turned to her, but her face was buried in his coat sleeve so that only an expanse of smooth cheek, and an unmistakable dimple were to be seen.

Obfuscated, her whisper reached him: "Crumb of manna at the corner of his mouth—drop of milk and honey trickling down his double chin . . . lemon-colored spats and waistcoats with his flowing robes. . . . Forced you to give in, and now that he's done it . . . gasps 'The blessed saints!' because he finds it all so beautiful—always the heavy-fisted romantic, my old A. J. . . ."



A SONG FOR MY MATE

By Marguerite O. B. Wilkinson

HIGHER than the slim eucalyptus,
Higher than the dim purple mountains,
Higher than the stern flight of eagles,
Rose our young hopes, long, long ago.

Sweeter than sweet wild berries,
Sweeter than a chill spring's bounty,
Sweeter than a meadowlark's carol
Were the young sweet joys that we knew.

More bitter than the swelling olive,
More bitter than a brackish river,
More bitter than a crow's hard laughter
Were the sorrows that we bore, my mate.

But nearer than the light is to the day,
Nearer than night is to the darkness,
Nearer than the winds to their crooning,
I am drawn, I am held to your heart!



THE reason why piety is so rare among women is not that they find it difficult to believe, but that they find it impossible to be humble.



THE country is the place where they raise the cherries for Manhattan cocktails.



AS soon as women are ours, we are no longer theirs.

CAMPING OUT

By Charles G. Shaw

THE man who wants to rough it.
The unsuspecting friend who offers to go with him.
The ridiculous enthusiasm.
The buying the unnecessary supplies.
The failure to buy the necessary ones.
The sport suits.
The patent gun that doesn't work.
The outing shoes that blister the feet.
The tackle for the wrong kind of fish.
The collapsible tent with directions.
The failure to understand the directions.
The canned food.
The inability to open the cans.
The condensed milk that has gone wrong.
The guide who knows nothing.
The starting out.
Lopside Lake!
The first day.
The tent that collapses during the night.
The heavy rain.
The sleepless night.
The long tramp through the woods.
The absence of anything to shoot.
The attempt to fish.
The lack of fish.
The canoe that leaks.
The friend who nearly drowns.
The guide who does nothing but drink.
The waning enthusiasm.
The forest fire.
The burning up of the provisions, tent, etc.
The bitter cold.
The long way from Broadway.
The shelterless camp.
The sleeping in the canoe.
The waking at dawn.
The guide who disappears.
The impossibility to find him.
The friends who fight.
The mad desire to get home.
The lack of food and water.
The awful hunger.
The parched throat.

The merciless sun.
 The all day walk to North Hatless.
 The utter fatigue.
 The arrival late at night.
 The greeting by the sheriff.
 The arrest for shooting without a license.
 The night in the lock-up.
 The rube judge.
 The enormous fine.
 The long trip back to New York.
 The home.



SWIFT CONQUEST

By Edna Wahlert McCourt

I HAVE always secretly read with avid interest newspaper accounts of mashers, even of men who misled girls. For, alas, no strange man had looked at me with smouldering eyes, nor moved a little closer on the street car seat. I had stirred no man swiftly —swept him off his feet—(only swift conquering can satisfy a natural woman)—till yesterday.

He was forty, clean faced as a boy, with bright yet mild blue eyes. He

stopped me as we passed. . . . What did he say? How can I remember? I only heard my heart beat.

Then a man appeared from nowhere, —a servant.

"Your pardon, Miss. But he won't hurt you. Don't be afraid. He's never harmed a soul, Miss. We don't need to lock him up. Come, Sir."

* * * *

I had conquered a drivelling idiot.



CA IRA!

By Frank Pease

A WISE man met a Fool to whom he said:
 "O, fool, why art thou so foolish?"
 To which the Fool replied:
 "Why be so wise?"
 And the Wise Man had no answer.



THE resistance a woman offers to being kissed may be a proof of her virtue, but too often it is merely a proof of her experience.

THE LAUGHING LADY

By Paul Hervey Fox

SHE had a sense of humour, so it was odd that she married him. Many marriages assume the proportions of tragedy, but hers took on the colour of a sardonic joke.

Perhaps (in accordance with a venerable explanation) she set the snare that other women might respect her powers and mark her for a skilled huntress. For he was a man eminently desirable for matrimony, a fellow of decent address, competent enough to secure a comfortable income, and—high qualification!—predestined to be fooled eternally by any little female thing.

It is a facile matter to conceive of the fashion in which she must have entrapped him. Beauty, in that sense in which we conceive it, she had not; but she carried her head as though loveliness were incarnate there, and somehow simultaneously engendered an air of quiet acceptance of the gift. Hence Vanity's thin voice was not discordantly intruded into the spiritual choir. Her chin, thrown up with a faint suggestion of pride, of inaccessibility, held the very honey of allurement. She was a woman of that shrewd sort whose urbanely distant manner and generous estimation of her own worth prick the healthy male into pursuit. To crush that pride, to dominate that nature, to growl, "Do this, my lady, for I desire it," and see the affair straightway executed, to hurl a potent goddess from her high pedestal and thereafter play the magnanimous brute,—these are desires essential and fundamental in the blunt man, be he no more barbaric than a poet or a haberdasher.

She must have married him, I think, from an unconscious concordance with

the conventional theory that a woman who misses domesticity misses her destiny. And further, she had no other field into which to throw her sharp energies. The trick of words she had, and of gesture, voice and simulation; but she forebore either to write or to act through an unwillingness to pay the bitter price of apprenticeship. To compel this acute woman to exercise her arts upon a single, stolid man was to distil injustice, but the thing was foreordained. Family, friends, and a world of fools heralded the action, and she was far too casual a creature to battle against their unspoken hortation.

The marriage took place. In that clipped sentence I pass over the trite details of the common catastrophe. You may imagine, if you like, banked blossoms, a huddle of scared men hushed in sympathetic solemnity, nervous smiles, a sudden giggle, bearing a near resemblance to its twin-sister, the sob, innumerable frocks and innumerable comparisons thereof, flushed faces and faces pale, a benevolent clergyman taking whatever credit there may be unto himself, a few sentimental tears, and at the last the ultimate, maudlin flight of the chief comedians. No doubt silver weddings, golden weddings, and the rest of them are in the main but celebrations for the kindly lapse of time since the ridiculous initial ceremony.

Back to my beginnings! She had a sense of humour, so it was odd that she married him. For he was, closely scanned through an analytic microscope, as ridiculous as his marriage. Most brides prefer the telescope of illusion; this one owned to a different taste.

He sang. With most women even the devil would have no chance against an angel who sang nicely. But it is one thing to have a polite friendship with a voice, another to live with one. The care with which such an endowment is guarded, the affection with which it is cherished, are revealed with encumbrant details not at all romantic.

Winter nights he swathed his throat with thick cloths and swallowed preventive preparations. The merest mist scared him into rubbers. If he sneezed his plump face grew pale with foreboding. When amongst strangers or playing the host, his delicate hesitation was a thing to see. He refused gently, pleaded lack of recent training, a touch of a cough, an ignorance of selections, and—coaxed for more coaxing.

Further I may not go and retain your good will. To say that to one who has witnessed the rehearsals the play lacks novelty is so obvious as to be hardly worth the stating.

She began to catalogue his characteristics at any early hour in their partnership. She was afraid that if she should once look at him, hard and unflinching, she would discover the horrid fact of his fatness. Why the man's very eyes were fat! And he ate in a slow, dreadfully earnest manner with those round, rolling eyes fixed on his plate. And he was a compound of petty egotisms. And he was sentimental to the despair of the intelligence. He was able seriously to believe in the emotion of love before breakfast. . . . He was even a good husband.

There are many things she might have done. She might have reformed him, or attempted to reform herself. She might have been bored, had she not been aware that people who are bored are invariably those that bore. She might have grown used to him, as, sadly enough, we grow used to everything. What, for instance, is more horrible when closely considered than a pocket handkerchief? But time has made the thing respectable and by now pretty women even delight to weep in one. She might have, failing this, put

poison in his soup. She might have given an amateur performance of Ibsen's masterpiece, or purchased a revolver and blown a hole of notoriety into the newspapers. She might have—but the point at issue is what she actually did.

When I tell you, you will be annoyed, for you are expecting that she pursued some erratic and thoroughly amusing course. The amusement is all hers. I said it was odd that she married him for she had a sense of humour . . . So she laughed at him.

It was an extraordinarily sensible thing to do, since she had no urgent desire to retain the man. Besides it developed for her an admirable temper of satisfaction. Even so poor a thing as common knowledge reports that the simplest way to preserve one's self esteem is to ignore one's betters and laugh at one's inferiors. The thing is not limited to individuals. Cities laugh at neighboring towns, and towns at adjoining villages, and thus forth endlessly. She laughed at his blundering sentimentality, at his littleness, his limitations. She opened her eyes, perceived he was a fat man, and shook the harder with silent mirth.

In due course he was made vaguely aware of this attitude, and sometimes glanced up from his paper to throw her a wondering look. The feather-light manner in which his grievances were received, the smile that lurked in the eye of his listener when he began a dolorous recountal of the day's adventurings, should have informed him of the facts. But he hadn't the habit of analysis, much less that of introspection, so it is to be conjectured that he quite missed the point of the joke. Not that he is greatly to be censured for his blindness. The packed crowd of us cherish the idea that we are most amusing when we are most entertaining. Whereas, in actuality, there is no more cheerful sight than to see one's neighbor in the dumps. We press him for his woes, tender him a cup of wisdom crushed from our own grapes of experience, even sigh with him that

we may not disrupt the harmony of the threnody. This we call sympathy.

But I digress from the helpless husband now in hand. He saw, I say, no joke; therefore he saw no laugh. But if he could not exactly fathom the wrong done him, he was at least cognizant of its existence.

"You don't understand me," he complained presently like a pretty, petulant girl. This phrase is chiefly uttered by people who are clearly understood. So with him. Naturally enough, he desired to be misunderstood that his wife might share his own illusions concerning himself.

A year crawled by or flashed by, whichever way you prefer to take it. Now it is peculiarly unpleasant to hear a joke repeated except, perhaps, for vaudeville devotees. The lady that laughed had the opportunity, through her adoption of a comparatively novel viewpoint, not merely of hearing one joke repeated at periodic spaces like an ancient's war anecdote, but of hearing it, aye, beholding it, continuously, like an eternal film that flickers from beginning to end, from end to beginning, forever.

Under such circumstances the thing was likely to lose its savor. She began to find that smiles came harder. She'd nothing left save resentment for having married a man who was so easy to swing about and about that it was hardly worth the trouble of doing so. This marvel among women even made attempts to grow friendly with his friends, but they were as dull and as silly as he. Most wives are either jealous of their husband's friends or in love with 'em, and it is difficult to say which alternative is the more unpleasant. The first she could hardly be; and as for the second, she had a curious respect for propriety and ran true to form.

Then one day her pretty Cousin Julia came on a visit, and Time regarded the future with a slight smile.

Cousin Julia was a little girl with large and innocent eyes that begged some strong, kind man to come and

protect her. Incidentally she was more to be feared than a rattler when he steals towards the lowlands in search of water, and more competent to guard herself than the mountain lion when the cubs are young.

Cousin Julia knew nothing of men; she was *so* unsophisticated! It was easy to see that the poor little thing was likely to idealize the first unscrupulous beast she encountered. Every man, realizing this, resolved to keep the other beasts from enchanting her by enchanting her first. So Cousin Julia—poor, pretty little thing—at the age of sixteen had discovered that a number of hairpins, nesting behind a picture in the drawing-room, may prove useful after one has had a polite call and desires to go upstairs and tell mother what Dick's opinion of the weather really was.

Cousin Julia would ask, "Do you think I'm pretty?" and stare with her large, naïve eyes for answer, with results that were appalling. She didn't know, you see, that such questions are uttered by older, wiser women. Poor little thing!

It is a matter of some doubt whether the lady that laughed could have retained her easily retainable husband on this comic occasion even if she'd so desired. As a matter of truth, she had no longer enough interest in the man to note which way the wind blew. So she didn't watch dear Cousin Julia particularly, or remark confidentially to her husband that that sort of girl is the kind that always becomes a stout woman with two double chins and the habit of wrinkly stockings.

In two days Cousin Julia had made him so sorry for her that his voice broke in one of his best songs when the thought of her muddled predicament—whatever it might be—darted into his mind. And in two days more she made him so sorry for himself that he gaped with wonder that he hadn't grasped it before.

Alone with him in the music room—so called because it contained a piano—one soft, Spring evening, while through

the opened windows poured a flood of damp and delicate airs, she first pointed out his wretchedness to him.

"You know I—I oughtn't to say this," she faltered, "but I think you're the most awfully brave man that ever lived."

"Why," he laughed with a throaty shake in his voice, "why, what do you mean?" He tried to look noble, and rather thin, and nonchalantly courageous.

Her eyes widened. "The way you—the way you—oh, I can't go on!"

"Little lady," he murmured, "I won't take this from you. You *must* speak candidly. Aren't we," he fumbled to a conclusion, "very dear to—that is—I mean—friends?"

"It's my cousin I'm talking about, of course. She doesn't appreciate you. I know I shouldn't say it, but she treats you horribly. And you—you take it so kindly, so bravely. Oh, you mustn't look mystified, you know only too well what I mean. . . . There! I suppose I've said something terrible. But I've never known any man except you that I—that I could say things frankly to like that. You're so—so big!"

He certainly was very fat. And perhaps that was what the poor little thing meant.

You may imagine, if you like, similar succeeding passages and their attendant consequences. And presently, of course, the thing stood forth rather nakedly, and the lady that laughed opened her clever eyes upon the airy situation.

How did she blunder into an awakening? Who can say? A look, a dropped glance, a word at breakfast spoken unawares, the trembling spirit of guilt stalking like a shadow, any one or a number of such thin incidents may have served to compound the clue.

Here, you will say, comes at last the touch melodramatic. Reasonable it is to conceive of cloaks and pistols, the thing called a "scene" concerning for once a matter other than an unexpected bill, a woman shrinking under a blow, the entry of some suave fellow dedi-

cated to succour and the art of chivalry, unshaven, assistant villains, an act of startling disclosures, and what not. Yet such hopes, it happens, are founded in this instance upon a pretty rock of *papier-mâché*. Rather did the wife quietly jot down data sufficient to support her conclusions, and then retire to her room for the inevitable, emotional outpouring. There she threw herself into a chair, and covered her face with her hands. Curious little whimpers of sound issued from lips that could not retain the immobility demanded of them by the proud mind. She appeared to be breathing in a series of irregular gasps. Her head was bowed forward. Her body shook and heaved. . . . You are quite wrong. She was only laughing.

Who shall dare lift a voice of censure? True, as she had a sense of humour, it was odd that she had married him. Grant that in her eyes the helpless husband held the elements of a certain sly mirth, and simultaneously granted is her right to chuckle at a whimsical aspect of the situation, cropping forth unexpectedly. After all, the joke was reinvigorated; and a happy freshness infused. And to take a merry thing seriously for that it is environed by sober disclosures is a pastime for living dead men. Nowhere is humour so quirky as in the very heart of solemn things: humour is blood brother to gravity.

Matters meanwhile went forward at the correct pace. The husband essayed to hide his figure from Cousin Julia's critical if innocent stare by interposing his voice. Melody is unfortunately diaphanous. He divided the affection he held for his plate with the lady, and revealed love's white-hot fetters about his arms by gazing into her eyes as often as into his egg-cup. Oddly enough, he had no malice for his wife despite the fact that he was after his own tablets of good and evil, putting upon her an abominable affront. His emotions, I think, were concentrated too closely about his own dull nature to admit of much squandering either of

love or hatred beyond the limited confines of his immediate self. So his face, averted from his wife, wore simply a faint hue of shame: nothing more.

The conspirators quite agreed that they understood each other. It was, however, a high and rarefied air which they shared in common: they collaborated on a charming little portrait of a mutual soul without splashing the thing with any tawdry flesh tints.

Whilst considering the fair purity of their affection, each covertly, and in privacy, examined the bearing of the lady that laughed. Their conclusion was to believe her blind or themselves excellent actors. The husband, of course, would have seen nothing in any event; and Cousin Julia could hardly be expected to make a different decision. According to her frank theory any wife, falling upon the dim footprints of suspicion, took direct and vigorous action, even though such action were to raise a reek of public scandal. It was plain that neither designs strategic nor simple were in contemplation; therefore, said Cousin Julia, no breath of suspicion.

One day when the platonic pair were in the garden, waiting patiently, no doubt, for the appearance of the serpent, Cousin Julia was suddenly aware of a slip from caution.

On the library table, it so happened, lay a copy of *Vanity Fair*, a gilded and obese book, an ornate tome little likely to be violated by the sacrilegious hands of curiosity. This, you must know, was sacred to my lovers: a veritable hollow oak-tree of old romance. Between its pleasant sheets each had put private messages to bed; these to be haled forth upon a later occasion, examined, and cremated.

In the particular instance under survey poor little Cousin Julia had removed the latest post, patronized it with a careless glance, and dropped it still more carelessly upon the table top. There it had remained, a thing of clear sentimental evidence, for any passing eye to mark until some further hours forward recollection brought up the picture in her brain. Then, quite sud-

denly, as will sometimes occur, a synthetically constructed photograph of the white, crinkly paper lying there, damning and damnable, a vision of herself marching absently from the room, and such coldly truthful details, formed in a flash of light. Promptly she apprised her cavalier of the business, deftly transferred the business to his stately shoulders, and ordered him to cut for it like the very devil.

The fool's guilty heart really did thump as he made his course towards the library. He pounded his wits to name what he had written, but he could only thickly remember his composition as an absurd and mawkish restatement of his condition. Had the thing by this time come to his wife's hands? At the thought his face went faintly pale, and his primary chin dropped back a little amongst its undulating brothers.

Hand on the library door, he paused, his pulses pounding like a trip-hammer on wool. He pushed softly on the panel, and then felt curiously calm. That which he had dreaded had occurred, nay was even now occurring, and he was aware of how hugely exaggerating a thing is anticipation, whether it be of a sanguine order or a sanguinary.

His wife, presenting an admirable view of her back, sat before the table with the little white slip before her. Her body quivered—with what it is hardly necessary to inform you. The helpless husband, however, was neither as shrewd nor as well-informed, and he insisted on suffering a slight pang at the sight of that silent and apparent misery. Then he thrust the weakness aside brusquely. The unavoidable—as very often occurs—had not been avoided.

The bored chasm yawned before him, and he gathered his energies for the leap. Quite frankly he did not relish the prospect of running away like a bad boy with poor, pretty Cousin Julia; for he was at least keen enough to perceive that it entailed a deal of self-sacrifice, and great ridicule, hurtful of business and sufficient to pierce even that over-

layer of flesh to his interior sensitive epidermis. But it was, he reflected sternly, his duty. Here he had sapped the happiness of one life, his wife's; and could he now rend and shatter Julia's sweet faith in humanity, her fine, valiant idealism, by sending her packing? Unnecessary is it to add that he had as yet advanced no suggestions of the eloping variety to Julia herself. If he had, it is rather possible that his own sweet faith and the rest of it would have suffered more severely than hers even if she'd had any. Thus far his mood for the moment.

He coughed. He meant the thing to be discreet, a trifle amused, a clever bit of commentary. . . . Instead, it sounded frightened and foolish. The stage directions of the affair from this point forward appeared to go completely to pieces. For he had counted upon his wife's leaping to her feet with a low cry, fronting him with blazing eyes, then sweeping forth a passionate accusation, to be met by an easily ironic acceptance of it on his part. After that he would speak at some length, a quiet, leisurely statement of the case which should prove the prelude to three changed lives.

Disappointment is at times a blacker word than despair. It was disappointment he endured at what ensued; and it was ebony-dark.

She rose to her feet, softly, lightly; and turned a smiling face to him.

"This is yours, I think?"

He took the proffered paper and blushed because he thought he was blushing.

Her eyes, gently humorous, fell quietly upon him without reproach or even irritation. Then she moved gracefully past. A closed door echoed in that apartment of shadows. He stood there with his mouth open, staring bewilderedly at the silly little letter in his hand . . .

Every man has in his life a supreme moment. Time's disclosures, for all that creep chiefly to a dull and ordered outcome, are sometimes sprung with the suddenness of a trap. To some men

is it given to encounter high fortune in a snap of the fingers; or to be toppled from a tower in that space to the mud of the pit. To others Love shows her face for a flying hour; others still hold their souls reflected starkly before them and tighten their eyes against that discovery. These and the like are things of a moment, and whether they hold within them a vision of hell or heaven, assuredly they are packed with elemental emotion.

To the dull creature standing there in the darkened room came now the radiant instant. He compassed an emotion that struck his wits staggering; and for once his mind sang like his voice.

His wife, as he saw it, was now aware of his cavortings; yet she obviously bore him no malice. Perhaps, perhaps, she had been awake to the humors of the situation since its inception. That she should set up a resistance of sobs, battle with the jagged weapon of hysteria, he had considered foregone; and against such an attack he was prepared to take a stand. But her inaggressiveness robbed him of his natural impulses, and what was vastly greater, created a picture of her—suffering, saying nothing, fighting bravely under the lying colors of indifference.

All the sentimentality of the man surged upwards at that consideration, and for the first time in his existence he departed from his own concerns to comprehend the bitter desolation, as he conjectured, of another. This woman had offered him no reproach, but he would have staked his mortality that she was stricken deep. Some basic nobility in that misconceived fancy must have caught him up; and a great rush of pity swept across the barriers of his shallow self. The earth swung and rocked; he was dizzy on the brink of a tremendous abyss. Humanity, in its infinite impotence, its hopeless heights and vain reaches, stood forth before him; and about his head swirled the profound winds of the soul.

The mood ebbed and left him once more a stolid, fleshly fellow whose mind

was to be regulated for the most part by his liver. But it had cast up on the shore of his consciousness, like drift-wood, a single dominating idea.

He returned to the garden, his head high with lofty purpose. Cousin Julia, with one quick glance in his direction, fathomed the material occurrences of his expedition, and murmured, "Oh, damn!" between her soft and innocent lips.

"Dearest," he said, "do not ask me to explain. But I want you—I want you to leave here—directly."

"She—knows? You send me away because—I thought perhaps I—you cared." Cousin Julia's utterance was pitifully broken. Her large eyes filled.

"Oh, God!" The ejaculation slipped out with a glib huskiness sufficient to procreate the belief that religion was invented for the accommodation of the dramatists. He caught her to him, and would have undoubtedly held her to his breast, as the phrase goes, except for a small blunder on the part of Nature . . . His stomach intervened.

Then he released her. "I forgot myself," he muttered, true to tradition. "You must go—at once . . . You must go." He turned and swung away, dejection appropriately depicted in his limp muscles and sagging figure. The poor little thing stared after him with dancing eyes. She was not particularly unhappy at the turn of events, for a recent mail had contained an invitation for a certain house-party which she wanted most awfully to accept. She had wondered as to how she could gracefully withdraw from the present affair; and now the thing was solved by circumstance. Also an excellent tribute had been paid to her powers. Ointment without flies, however, is a spiritual commodity not thus far discovered, and the fact that she must presently face the injured wife was an unpleasant reflection.

Nevertheless, she speedily hit upon a proper atmosphere and sought that lady out. To her she confided the content of the invitation; she must leave immediately; she was sorry; she'd had a

splendid time. Then she inclined her head, and politely waited for the bolt. It was a far more startling one than she had reckoned. Fancy a gentleman with his body upon the block, an executioner with gleaming axe standing over him, the lecherous, loose-mouthed populace assembled about the platform, and then consider his emotions when the blade of the executioner flashing downwards on his neck reveals itself as a shape of silver paper stuffed with cotton. I offer that as analogy, for thus ran the wife's rejoinder:

"Oh, I'm sorry! Still, if you must go, you must. But when you're through, won't you come back and complete the visit, dear? You get along so well with my husband, I think; and I like to see him entertained."

Cousin Julia parted her lips without precision. The game was too complex for her comprehension. She recovered control in time to stammer out a grateful acceptance. . . .

Departure followed within the hour. The poor fellow was not there to say God-speed; in fact, he wasn't to be found. Perhaps he was hiding in the coal-bin—no doubt an excellent place for black thoughts and concealment.

"How annoying!" declared his wife. "He'll be angry at having missed you. But then he's to see you soon again, of course. A week, shall we say?"

Their kiss of separation defies analysis. It must have been a thing to witness, that amusing caress. The lady that laughed beyond doubt found it so. And the handkerchief she waved in farewell was pressed to her lips but a short while later.

In the house afterwards she came upon her husband.

"Where have you been?" she queried with incomparable art, neglecting not even a tinge of conventional irritation in the tone. "Cousin Julia's had to leave suddenly, and we couldn't find you to say good-bye."

The only sincere man is the man without a vocabulary; the only sincere woman is dead. He might, had he the ability, have enwrapped his thoughts in

soothing tissue of words. But as a matter of actuality he simply stared, a heavy, helpless, mooning stare that prattled garrulously of his feelings. How could the clever lady do anything with a man like that?

She swept aside the subject for later disposal, and it was not again brought up till dinner that evening. He bore himself with a certain silent humility through the meal, and the wife ascertained that a full confession accompanied by sticky repentance was imminent. She forestalled such a course when the coffee was brought, and they were alone.

"By the way, I forgot to tell you. I know you liked Cousin Julia immensely, and apparently she likes you. So I begged her to come back here next week and finish her visit, and she's consented."

Upon his round face vast incredulity stepped. His forehead crinkled into puzzled lines. His eyes demanded their invariable obesity cure. He dried his tongue on his lips.

"You . . ." Then a flash lit up his features. This admirable creature, his wife, had understood things without a word from him. She was now assured of his strength for the right, of his

high kindness towards herself; and this—this was a proof of her trust. Action for action, and she had equalled his own sacrifice.

"Dear," he said softly, "your confidence isn't misplaced. You can pin your faith to me. You know me through and through."

"Yes," she answered, and her eyes lighted with a weary laughter, "I know you through and through."

She knew, of course, Cousin Julia quite as thoroughly; and she was aware of their relative abilities. Clearly the impending completion of Cousin Julia's visit would have its share of comedy. And after all the revised joke was superior to the original. A pity to have crossed out the additional line, even temporarily!

Her laughter was of a cruel kind, you will say. Perhaps. But even had she considered the circumstances serious, she might be justified in her amusement. It is merely necessary to reflect that the tragedies of the present are the farces of the future to find an anticipatory grin for most human happenings. Only one matter baffles me, bespeaking inconsistency: she had a sense of humour, so it was odd that she married him.



AFTER A SUMMER SHOWER

By J. M. Lane

THE smoking freshness of the fragrant earth intoxicates my nostrils.
 Rain drops glisten star-like on the sweet-smelling honeysuckle.
 High above, a patch of sapphire sky laughs through the storm clouds.
 My heart is more buoyant than this revived Nature:
 For, in the terror of the moment, when the lightning splintered the tree under
 which we were hiding,
 She slipped her hand into mine, and lay quietly against my breast,
 Like a trembling white dove,
 In the fingers of one who has saved it from the falcon.

THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

By Stanley Bradwin

HAROLD SMITH, all the time since he had left the office to go to his lodgings at Shepherd's Bush, could think of but one thing. It was a story of gallant adventure that Charley Tewson had told him that day, a story about a girl on top of an omnibus who, so Charley said, had blushed and fluttered superbly beneath his manly gaze. She was "the sweetest little thing" Charley had ever met, and she had shown her susceptibility to his blandishments in the most naif and delicious manner. Whether the story was true or false did not matter to Harold. Most probably it was true, for Charley certainly had the knack of ingratiating himself with the girls on the slightest or no provocation at all.

Harold contrasted Charley's joyous days with his own colorless existence, in which even innocent sweethearts had so far had little part. It seemed to him that he was missing everything that was worth living for. If it was so easy to make the acquaintance of pretty girls and win from them those smiles which suffuse life with a gaudy glow, then why not begin without delay? It was evidently not a question of social position or money. Charley was just a city clerk like himself, earning only a few more shillings a week. All that was wanted was the will, and there would soon be a way.

As he entered the tube station at the Bank of England, Harold fiercely resolved henceforth to devote his leisure to amorous exploration and adventure. London was full of beautiful and lonely girls, of women of all sorts of tastes and temperaments. He would begin with one who was impulsive and for-

sign, something Italian or French, a girl whose soul was like warm wine. Such exquisite and romantic women were to be found in London. He would find one.

At the Bond street station the train became more crowded than it had been. A number of young women from the Mayfair and Oxford street shops and dressmaking establishments got in. Harold rose from his seat and offered it to a girl who was standing in front of him. She thanked him and sat down. Harold took hold of the strap hanging over the girl's head. As he swayed and staggered with the motion of the train, he almost at times leaned over her. He noted that she was good-looking and had a slim, girlish figure. Further she seemed of an agreeable nature. Why not try to make her acquaintance? This chance, as well as any other, might make an interesting beginning to the campaign of sentimental adventure.

Harold had never before tried deliberately to make the acquaintance of a girl he did not know. In fact, it had always seemed to him not quite the proper thing for a respectable young man to do. And yet, he reflected, he knew hardly any girls, certainly none he cared for, and if he was to be content with what his limited social intercourse might produce, well, he would never get far. Surely, too, half the fun of the duel of sex was the quest of the unknown. The whole etiquette of making new friends would have to be thrown aside. He would certainly speak to the girl sitting in front of him.

It was a more difficult task than he expected. He found himself far more

timid than he believed he was, and as he tried to put together the words for an opening remark, he discovered that he was actually nervous. His courage was fast oozing out and he had almost decided to abandon the enterprise when the train pulled up at the Marble Arch station with such a jerk that he lurched forward over the girl.

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, somewhat confusedly.

The girl looked up and seemed about to say something.

"They pull these trains up too quick," Harold explained, feeling that the girl was not going to snub him. His nervousness was disappearing, now that he had succeeded in saying something.

"Yes, they do," said the girl.

Harold began to think of another illuminating remark on the subject of underground railway management, dimly conscious at the same time that the topic was not very appropriate to the beginning of an adventure.

"The companies treat the public like a lot of dogs," he said, with the air of an aggrieved and much older citizen.

"Too many people have to stand up and get squashed in the rush hours," the girl said.

"It is a pleasure to give up one's seat to a lady," Harold proceeded, feeling he had got the right cavalier touch at last. "But still, I agree, there should be seats for all."

There was further discussion of the underground's shortcomings until the train reached Holland Park.

"Good-bye," said the girl, "I get out here."

"So do I," Harold replied.

He accompanied her out of the train and to the lift, meanwhile changing the subject of conversation to the spring weather, which was now beginning to be very pleasant. She apparently did not resent his company. When they emerged from the lift on the street, he asked in what direction she was going.

"I don't think you had better come with me," she said.

"Let me come part of the way," Harold urged.

"But we really don't know one another."

"If we don't, then let us introduce ourselves," Harold replied, priding himself on the neat solution he had found for the difficulty.

They told one another their names and addresses. The girl's name was Hilda Manifold. She was an assistant in a confectioner's shop in Bond street, and she lived with her parents not far from the Holland Park tube station.

"Have you any objection to my walking with you now?" Harold asked.

"It isn't that *I* have any objection, but my people might."

"I should be awfully glad to see you again; that is, if you want to."

"I should like to, also," the girl replied quite unaffectedly. "If you are at the corner of Bond street and Oxford street at 6.15 to-morrow evening, we can walk through the park home."

They then shook hands and parted decorously for the evening.

Harold was much elated by his success. Hilda was undeniably a pretty girl. She had brown eyes and brown hair and red lips and a figure that was neither too plump nor too slender. She was probably nineteen or twenty years old. But she was not altogether the type of girl that Harold imagined was romantic. Instead she was nice and friendly and very respectable. It would be difficult to storm and conquer the heart of such a girl. But in that fact lay the whole charm and lure of the game. As soon as he had gained an insight into how it had to be played, he would plan for victory. For the moment, however, he was overjoyed by the fact that he had got to know the girl at all, and mainly because, though he did not realize it, he had never so far been friendly with a girl as pretty and as pleasant.

The following day dragged along with painful slowness, but at last the time came, and at a few minutes before 6.15 Harold was at the appointed place. Hilda was late. Ten minutes passed, and Harold began to fear that she was not coming at all, and that the

adventure had missed fire. But she did come, nearly fifteen minutes late, with smiling apologies for keeping him waiting. They set off along Oxford street with the setting sun in front of them. The girl was obviously pleased to have a companion. When they entered the park, Harold asked her to take his arm. As she slipped her hand through his arm, he felt an exquisite thrill, and again, when he took her hand in his and gently squeezed it and felt that the girl was not unresponsive, thoughts of an unprecedented pleasantness swept through his mind and sent what he thought were currents of electricity all over his body. His first great adventure in amour had begun.

It was dusk as they reached the end of the path that led into Kensington Gardens, but the gates had just been closed.

"Let us walk back," Harold said.

"I must not be home late."

"But it will spoil everything to go now," he said, with a softness new to him in his voice. The deepening twilight and the presence of the girl exalted him strangely. And the girl, too, seemed alive to the poetry of the passing moment.

"Half an hour won't matter," Harold pleaded.

"Then let us walk back to the Marble Arch, where we can take the tube," she suggested.

They returned along the path they had just followed, still holding one another's hands.

"This is wonderful," Harold said, and he added, making his first declaration: "You are wonderful."

The girl was silent, and then, in matter-of-fact tones that escaped Harold, she asked:

"Do you really feel like that about me?"

"Yes, I do, really and truly," he replied, but he was conscious that their intimacy was taking a turn that did not altogether lead in the direction he, the sinister adventurer, the amateur Lothario, was seeking.

They came to a seat which was un-

occupied, and at Harold's suggestion they sat down. Remembering his great purpose, he at once and without hesitation put his arm round the girl, clasping her somewhat clumsily. She protested and then acquiesced, saying:

"Aren't you very bold, seeing we hardly know one another yet?"

"Don't you like it?" he asked with a touch of bravado. "Of course, you do."

"Don't say 'of course' or I'll think you have a very poor opinion of me."

She tried to free herself from his oafish embrace.

"You're quite wrong. I think you are just wonderful. You are the nicest girl I have ever known."

He felt he had reassured her, for when he again ventured to embrace her he was gratified to feel that she did not resist, but, in fact, drew nearer to him. Her face was very close to his, and his next act was to kiss her. And again to his delight there was no movement of resistance. She seemed to like it, to thrill to it as he did. For some minutes they sat in silence. Then Hilda sat bolt upright and asked:

"How many girls have you kissed before?"

"Not one," Harold replied, bitterly aware that he was speaking the truth.

"How can I be certain that you won't get tired of me as you have of the girls before me?"

"There haven't been any before, and there won't be any after."

He said this with so much emphasis that she did not pursue the argument further. Softening in her manner, she said:

"I believe you, Harold, and because I think you are a very nice boy, I shall let you be my friend."

"We must be more than friends," Harold whispered, remembering again his role of adventurer.

"Perhaps, when we know one another better, and when I find that I can trust you."

Obviously she was not to be easily won, Harold told himself. He began to speculate how he could overcome her

defense. One thing was certain, and that was that he would have to be very wary. He asked her to go to dinner with him the following evening. She accepted the invitation. Harold decided that there would have to be champagne, no matter what it cost. Champagne was the immemorial and invariable drink upon the battlefield of love.

Next day at lunch Harold reported to Charley, the expert, the opening skirmishes in the great adventure. Charley congratulated him on his good fortune in interesting a Bond street shopgirl.

"They have some stunning girls there, but the chaps they'll notice are the rich young earls and lords around Mayfair."

Harold was extremely pleased to find that his first affair won the appreciation of such a connoisseur as Charley.

"They are awfully expensive girls," Charley added. "You have to spend a terrible lot of money on them."

"I've asked her to dinner this evening. What sort of a place will she expect to be taken to?"

"Dinner in a private room at Blank's will cost you about two pounds."

Harold had not thought of a private room. He had a lot to learn about amorous adventure. As for expense, that did not matter, for he had drawn that morning on his savings-bank account.

At seven o'clock in the evening Harold and Hilda met. She was looking very charming in a dress that was not evening dress, but cut low enough to show her white throat and neck.

"Harold, I don't want you to take me to an expensive place, because I know you can't afford it."

"Never mind that," Harold replied. "We're going to Blank's."

A flush of anger swept over the girl's face.

"We are *not* going to Blank's," she exclaimed indignantly. "I've a good mind to leave you here and now, and never see you again."

"What on earth is wrong?" he asked, trying to appear calm and unconcerned.

"How could you ask a respectable

girl to go to a place like that? It only shows what you think of me."

"Nonsense," Harold replied, trying to assume the urbanity of a seasoned man of the world, but at heart feeling that he had made a mess of things. "There isn't anything wrong with Blank's."

"Of course, you've never taken girls there before, have you?"

"I have never been there in my life."

"Well, I have," said Hilda, with a conclusive click that ended the argument.

Hilda was quite clearly a prudent girl, and, moreover, well on her guard, and with more knowledge of some things, Harold reflected, than he had himself.

"I'm sorry I asked you to go to Blank's," he said apologetically, when he saw that he had to cover up his retreat as well as possible. "I told a man I know that I was going to dinner this evening with a young lady and asked him to recommend a place. He said Blank's. I am awfully sorry I asked you to go to a place that is not respectable. Really and truly I have never been there and don't know anything about it."

"Harold, if I thought that you were not speaking the truth and that I could not trust you, I should never see you again."

"I didn't mean any harm, really, Hilda."

"Then you are forgiven."

She smiled, and taking his arm told him of a little French restaurant, which was not expensive. They were lucky in getting a table in the quietest corner. As the meal progressed, Hilda became more and more charming, and the gaiety of her youth bubbled over. She was enjoying the change from having supper at home with her family. Harold was almost inclined to think he had acted like a cad. He was glad of her companionship, even if, as it now seemed, they would never be anything but the most innocent of sweethearts.

As they sat over the black coffee and

Harold smoked a cigarette—Hilda did not smoke, and had earlier forbidden him to order wine—there came a pause in their talk. The girl was occupied with some thought of her own.

"I suppose you will wonder," she said at last, "how I came to have been at Blank's. It was only once. A young fellow, very rich and related to an earl, used to come into our shop to buy sweets. Whenever he could he talked a lot of nonsense to me. I was foolish enough to believe him. One evening as I was leaving the shop, he was waiting for me. He wanted me to go to dinner with him, but I had to get home. I promised to go another evening. Well, I did. And that is where he took me—to Blank's. From the outside and when you get into the hall it looks quite all right. But the waiter at once led us down a narrow passage at the end of which was a little room, and in it only one table laid for two. It was all very quiet and very private. I did not altogether like being left alone with a man in such a place but I still thought he was a nice boy, and I agreed we should have dinner there. I sat down, and then I noticed a door that seemed to open into another room. I asked what the room was for. He grinned and said, 'Look and see.' I opened the door. That was enough for me. I instantly picked up my coat and walked out of the place before he or anyone else could stop me. I never saw him again. So you see why I was so terribly insulted when you asked me to go to the same place."

Harold could think of no comment to make, but he wondered whether Charley's conquests were as facile as they seemed. As he walked home that night after leaving Hilda, he reviewed the situation carefully. If he was to carry out his original plan of adventure, he would have to make a fresh start. He would have to drop Hilda. She might be a nice sort of girl for a fellow to marry, but marriage was not his object. Still, she was worth keeping as a friend. She was pretty, and when she was dressed up as she had been that

evening a fellow could not help being proud of being seen with her. Besides, she was a charming companion. No, he would not altogether drop her. After all, a man should have a wide circle of female acquaintances. Some would be only friends, like men friends, while others would be a good deal more. The solution was quite simple. He would not drop Hilda, but he would see her only now and then. And he would seek fresh fields of adventure.

At the office next day Charley was still full of his "sweetest little thing you ever saw" and of certain amusing episodes that had occurred the night before at a restaurant where the proceedings did not wind up till breakfast time. Harold debated whether, if he laid the facts of his own case before Charley, he would receive any guidance from one so much more experienced than himself. But he was in no mood to reveal his failure and probably be made fun of.

For a week or more the affair with Hilda continued along the path of innocent friendship into which it had been directed by the girl. All the time, however, Harold was meditating the next adventure on which he intended to set forth. If he kept on spending nearly all his leisure with Hilda, he would deprive himself of the golden opportunities he felt certain were waiting for him. Accordingly, he deliberately avoided seeing Hilda for a whole week, and spent his time in haunting the places where he heard that adventures were most likely to be encountered. Harold discovered that the girls who frequented such places always went about in couples, and that the young men did likewise.

One evening at Eel Pie Island he observed a typical episode. Two young fellows, probably clerks like himself, got into conversation with a couple of girls, and then after a little while paired off, one young man with one girl and the other with her companion. But Harold knew no one who would make a suitable mate for expeditions of this kind except Charley Tewson, and Char-

ley was already too fully occupied.

A week thus passed away without result. When he returned to his lodgings on the eighth night since he had last seen Hilda, Harold was a very much discouraged young man. Then he began to think that he was treating Hilda rather cruelly. So he wrote her a brief note, asking her to go for a walk at Richmond the following evening.

When they met she was very cool in her manner, and refused to take his arm.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Wait till we can talk alone."

There was hardly any conversation until they were sitting alone on a bench not far from the river. Then, without warning, Hilda burst into tears. Harold had so far never seen her like this.

"What's the matter, little girl?" he asked, genuinely upset. It made him uncomfortable to see the girl cry.

"You are tired of me already," she said sorrowfully. "Why have you neglected seeing me for more than a week?"

"I've been very busy," was the clumsy lie in answer.

"You've been taking some other girl out, I suppose."

Harold warmly denied that he had done anything of the kind.

"You made me believe that I was the only girl you cared for, and I believed you. Do you think I want you as my friend when you are making love to other women?"

Harold became quite indignant in his denials.

"You don't want me to be friends with you any longer," the girl said, refusing to be appeased.

"Yes, I do, Hilda; you know I do."

"Then promise not to neglect me so cruelly again."

He promised. It was an easy way of soothing the girl, if that was all she demanded. Of course, when the real adventure came to pass, it would be as easy to break the promise. This was a game in which there could be

no scruples. Did not the proverb say that all was fair in love and war?

When he had given her his promise and vowed that she was the most wonderful girl in the world, she put her arms round him and kissed him with more emotion than she had yet shown, whispering at the same time:

"Harold, I thought we were going to be friends for always and always. You do want me as much as I want you, don't you?"

"Of course I do," he replied, noting as a discovery he had just made that the week of neglect had redoubled her ardour for him. Yes, cruelty and neglect were weapons to be used at times in this game.

"I don't want any other friend but you, Harold, and I want you always."

Her devotion was so appealing that he clasped her closely and covered her face with kisses. Surely he was now achieving mastership.

"I want you always, sweetest one," he whispered, "and I want you to give yourself to me entirely."

"I want to give myself to you, dear," she replied.

He was certain that these were words of surrender.

"But you know I can't," she added quickly.

"Yes, you can, dearest sweet one," he pleaded. "You know you can, because I love you and you love me."

"I can't, Harold, I can't. I should die of shame if I did."

He felt the girl in his arms trembling. With every fibre of his body he desired her. He clasped her more closely and kissed her on the lips, and then, before he was aware of what he was saying, he exclaimed, swayed by an overmastering impulse:

"Then you must marry me."

The girl remained silent.

"Will you marry me, dear?" Harold asked.

"You don't care enough for me to want me to be your wife," she replied, now much calmer.

"Yes, I do, Hilda. I love you and I want you to marry me."

There was the contented smile of victory on the girl's face as she said:

"I shall be your wife, dear, as soon as you wish."

Next day at the office Charley had an amusing story to tell of his last night's adventure. Harold listened in silence as he pondered another new

idea that had come to him, that profli-gates were born, not made.

"And how are you getting on with that Bond Street girl you took to Blank's the other night?" Charley asked.

But Harold evaded answering the inquiry, and became as reticent as a brick wall.



HOW TO ATTEND A FANCY DRESS PARTY

By André Saville

FOR generations, people have racked their brains to devise a becoming, yet original, costume for a fancy-dress party. In point of fact, none has been original and few have been becoming. The Pierrot, the bandit, the drunken sailor, etc., are all types with which we are thoroughly satiated.

If one, therefore, wishes to attend a costume party—though Heaven only knows why—the guise he ought to assume should be that of a waiter. A common waiter. Its advantages are so many they may scarcely be enumerated.

Primarily, its preparation requires no elaborate designing, and is one which may be easily adjusted in a very few minutes. Moreover, by ordinarily skillfull operation, one may enter exempt from admission fees. It yields still further benefits. As a disguise it is complete, for no one ever looks at a waiter. Furthermore, the necessity of dancing is practically obviated. One merely flits from table to table, taking orders, but under no circumstances effecting their realization. *And by adroitly appearing when the tipping takes place, one may accumulate quite a tidy sum.*



WHY

By Robert Finlay Bush

I DID not go to church to-day
 Because my wife forgot
 To send my other suit
 To have it pressed.
 But I wished to go to church to-day,
 And so
 I tried to press my pants
 Myself,
 But did not think to empty out
 The matches
 From
 The pockets
 After which,
 I did not feel like church
 To-day.

AT EIGHTY-TWO

By Thyra Samter Winslow

GRANDMAMMA is eighty-two. All day she sits by the window in the library, sewing on bits of embroidery.

"What are you thinking of?" I ask her.

"Other days," says Grandmamma.

"—there was a boy, once over in Arnhem. His name was Adolph. I was eighteen and he was a year older. He gave me books and chocolates wrapped in gilt paper. He told me he loved me. But he could not marry me. My dot was not big enough and our religions were different. Then I married your grandfather. He was thirty-five. Adolph cried at the wedding. We came to America and I never saw Adolph again.

"On the boat we had the salon cabin. We had to pay for it in gold coin. It took thirty days to get to America. We ate at the captain's table. He liked the way I spoke English and the way I danced. He was a good dancer, but there were other good dancers on the boat, too.

"In New York, oh, the styles were terrible. Nobody wore heels at all. I took a hatchet and chopped the heels off all of my slippers, grey and black

and pink ones with rose-buds on them, no leather or kid, just silk and satin like my dresses. And next year, when the heels were off, heels came into style, over here. The women here did not know how to do their hair.

"At the hotels there were dances, too. The men all liked to dance with me. One man danced with me until your grandfather got angry. Your grandfather was a good man, but he did not like to dance. He was a little stout and he was not a good dancer."

Grandmamma had been with me when I was a baby and she said I was her favorite grandchild. "Grandmamma," I asked, "do you ever think of the time when I was little?"

"When you were little? No, why should I? You were a good baby, but very ugly." She took careful little stitches.

"See the blue in this embroidery? I had a dress that color one year, with ribbons. In Philadelphia I met an army officer at a garden party. He was a handsome man—very tall. We ate little cakes on a balcony and he pretended to be disappointed when I told him that I was married. Another time—"

Grandmamma is eighty-two.



THE one vice that society does not condone is conspicuous virtue.



WOMAN is at once the apple and the serpent.



SHIRTS

By Margaret Ashmun

CECIL ALBERT FRASER was arranging himself for the day. It was not early, and Cecil was in a hurry. He had slept somewhat later than he should have done, in view of the fact that he was due at his desk at Clevver and Allwright's in less than half an hour. Cecil had often remarked that he was never intended for a rotten working-man; the truth of his conclusion was undeniable. There were two reasons why he would never shine in the world of labor: he had a mother who had named him Cecil, and he was heir to an aged uncle who was rich. I need say no more.

Cecil Fraser was as handsome as a moving-picture hero. His hair was black and slightly waved; his eyes were deep and dark; he had an aristocratic chin and a nose that made his profile quite correct. He looked well in his clothes—or in anyone else's.

Now, as I have said, Cecil was dressing. He had reached the stage—not an advanced one, it must be confessed—at which he was about to put on his shirt. In a pale blue dressing-gown with a silk cord and tassel, he rummaged through his chiffonnier (his landlady's, that is to say) of quarter-sawed oak, with two handles missing. The first shirt that he took out was torn at the collar; he cast it on the floor. The next had a cuff hanging loose; he threw it under the bed. The third was split down the back; he rent it asunder and trampled on it.

The fact was that Cecil was in straits for shirts. Clevver and Allwright were contemptibly unappreciative of the value of a correct nose and an aristocratic chin in their office. Clev-

ver had a nose like a cream-jug, and the less said of Allwright's chin the better. At any rate, from week to week Cecil had been obliged to defer replenishing his wardrobe. Its deficiencies were becoming painfully apparent.

Nevertheless, he found at length a shirt that he could wear. It was the last one in the drawer. "Gosh!" sighed Cecil, as he struggled with his collar-buttons, "that was a close shave!" He did not worry as to where his next shirt was to come from. It was not Cecil's custom to worry if the wants of the moment were supplied.

With his eye on the clock—for Allwright had a low and common way of noticing when you came in—Cecil Albert selected a dark red tie from the jumble on the gas-jet, and was proceeding to knot it when a knock resounded on his door. He opened the door with one hand, while he grasped the tie with the other. A small boy stood on the threshold with a telegram. It was prepaid: "Thank heaven!" ejaculated Cecil, tearing open the envelope. Swiftly he read the typewritten words on the yellow slip:

Your uncle may go at any time, come if possible.

J. Tweedles.

The signature was that of his uncle's man, imported from England. The ten words of the telegram testified to J. Tweedles' thoughtful thrift.

Cecil Fraser did not stop to vent his grief at the prospective passing-on of his dear uncle, for whose health he had long felt extreme solicitude. He finished knotting his tie, put on his coat, assured himself that he had sufficient

store of cigarettes for a half-day's journey, and packed his traveling bag. He put in such articles as wisdom suggested he might need. For reasons not necessary to state, he did not put a shirt into his valise.

He turned his purse and his pockets inside out. Not enough, by a long chalk. Confound Tweedles! He might have telegraphed some cash. A long search revealed a pair of cuff-links, a gift of the same dear uncle who figures in this tale. Cecil was smitten with wonder that he had overlooked them in previous financial crises. On the whole, he was glad that he had.

He hurried down the stairs of the boarding-house. His landlady, a stooped and leathery woman with a chronically dirty apron, intercepted him at the foot of the stairs. "Aren't you going to have any breakfast this morning, Mr. Fraser?" she twittered with concern. She had a daughter, and had heard of the rich uncle.

"Not to-day," said Mr. Fraser brusquely, swinging his bag clear of her malodorous skirts. "Never again," he murmured, as he banged the front door.

The cuff-links were duly disposed of, after some haggling. The station reached, Cecil snatched a stand-up gulp of toast and coffee, and despatched a telegram to Clevver and Allwright, briefly stating the reason for his absence. Then he settled himself in the Pullman for a half-day of contemplation of the future. So great was his fortitude and self-control that you would never have suspected that he was travelling to the bedside of a stricken relative. A man must be brave in the face of all misfortunes.

His uncle's house was a roomy dwelling in a handsome suburb of the great city. Tweedles met Cecil in the hall. "Very low, sir," he replied in subdued tones to the inquiry of the anxious nephew.

Cecil was led into a shaded chamber where the dull light showed a bald, yellow old man breathing slowly and heavily in an expanse of white coverlet and

pillow. There was nothing that Cecil could do. He therefore proceeded to make himself comfortable. His room was next to his uncle's dressing-room. A door opened into the dressing-room and another into the bathroom.

Cecil awoke the next morning feeling particularly fit. He had a bath, and then he had his breakfast in bed. He was in excellent spirits. After a while, he rose, thinking, with a smile of good-natured contempt, about his fellow-slaves at Clevver and Allwright's. "Never again," was the burden of his song.

On one finger he lifted the shirt that he had taken off the night before. The trip had been a grimy one. "Ugh," said Cecil, curling his aristocratic lip. Could he, by some miracle, have put a shirt into his bag? He looked, to assure himself, hoping that what he wanted would evolve, as is the way with Cecils. There was no shirt in the bag.

He sat on the edge of the bed, in the pale blue dressing-gown. His forehead was not so smooth as heretofore. He pondered. Next week, perhaps, a cool half-million; to-day a still cooler deficiency of shirt. *Que faire?* as they say in the romances.

To confess the situation to the grim and lofty Tweedles was unthinkable.

Cecil stole into the dressing-room. The door of his uncle's room was closed. He walked up to the chiffonier and opened a drawer. Saved! Here indeed were shirts. Such shirts. Soft as thistle-down, clean as the cleanliness of the whistle. Striped shirts, tucked shirts, plain shirts, embroidered shirts, linen shirts, silk shirts—one could ask for no more and no better shirts in heaven. The old man, always a fastidious dresser, had evidently forgotten that on the other shore one dons the robes provided by the Company. He had supplied himself with shirts enough, as it seemed to Cecil's famished eye, to last for all eternity. They were all new. Cecil counted them. There were two dozen. He examined the trade-mark inside the collar-band. The name was that of the best shirt-maker

in ten states. "What they must have cost!" gloated Cecil, doing mental arithmetic at a rate that would have made his fortune with Clevver and Allwright.

He let his fingers slide over the smooth shirt-fronts. Cecil loved good apparel with a pious passion. Remember the deficit from which he had suffered. Remember his youth and his temptation. He lifted three of the shirts and took them to his own room. As he did so, he had a melancholy thought that his uncle would never put any of them on.

His uncle had a peculiar way—or place—of marking his shirts. At the line where the waistband would have been if there had been any, he had his name printed in large capital letters. The shirts, be it known, were all of the coat sort, open from neck to hem. Thus Cecil was confronted with the legend, soon, no doubt, to be engraved in marble:

L. A. FRASER

His uncle's name was Lyman Albert. Cecil contemplated the three shirts with satisfaction. Some instinct which we will not define had impelled him to put into his bag a bottle of indelible ink, long unopened. Cecil took out this bottle, found a pen, and cleared off the table, making all neat and businesslike. Laying the shirts upon the table, he set about changing the labels. The mark was, as we have seen:

L. A. FRASER.

It now became:

IL. A. FRASER
CIL. A. FRASER
ECIL. A. FRASER
CECIL. A. FRASER

The letters at the left of the *L* were not so straight as they might have been, and the unnecessary period distressed the artist, but, nevertheless, he gazed upon his work with all but perfect content. The three shirts underwent this transformation. When they were finished, Cecil thought how well the others would look with similar inscriptions.

The upshot was that before lunch he had marked the whole twenty-four. Seldom had Cecil done so much work in one forenoon.

In the hall he met his uncle's man. The doctor had just gone.

"How is my uncle, Tweedles?"

"Quite the same, sir."

"Very sad," commented Cecil. He looked unusually well in his fresh linen and his black tie, donned for the occasion. He sat for ten minutes at his uncle's bedside. The old man did not seem to recognize him. Cecil went down to the dining-room and had a most appetizing lunch. In the afternoon he strolled about the grounds, read the newspapers, had a nap, and wandered through the house, appraising what he saw. He had done this in times past, but not so carefully.

The next morning a fresh shirt was ready to his hand. He put it on with an almost solemn delight. The feeling of it under his fingers gave him so much joy that he almost forgot the state of his uncle's health. However, he inquired, as a matter of course.

"Better, sir," said Tweedles. In his eyes there was an almost unservantlike gleam.

"Better!" gasped Cecil. Then he recollected himself. "Good!" he exclaimed. "Fine! But isn't it rather extraordinary?"

"It does seem so, sir," rejoined Tweedles discreetly.

The next day the news was still more startling. "Much better, sir. He says he'll be dressed by to-morrow."

Cecil would have been apprehensive had not his better judgment assured him that an old man once laid low is not likely to recover in haste. He took heart, although he was, it must be owned, just a trifle uneasy.

He visited his uncle's bedside, to see for himself. The invalid was propped up, eating gruel from a Canton china bowl. He greeted his nephew with a suavity that savored of humor.

"Queer what ups and downs a fellow has," he remarked in a voice that did not quaver much.

"Queer, indeed, thought Cecil, while he answered with polite concurrence.

The next day Uncle Lyman announced his intention of being dressed. He would not lie in a night-shirt—he had never adopted pajamas—but vowed that he would have on shirt and tie, and trousers, too, if it might be that his strength permitted.

Cecil was requested to assist Tweedles at the old beau's toilet. He covered an inly anxious heart with a bland smile of affection.

The preliminaries were accomplished. "Now, what shirt will you have, sir?" Tweedles was solicitous and cheerful.

"One of those new ones from Bluett's," answered the old man. "I'm glad I ordered that two dozen. I was getting a bit low on shirts. A white pongee one would be about right."

"Very well, sir."

Cecil held his breath. One must needs be brave. Tweedles returned from the dressing-room with the white silk shirt across his arm. Cecil twisted his chin as if his collar hurt him.

Uncle Lyman stretched a yellow hand toward the shirt. "Let me see it," he commanded. "Did they mark 'em all right?"

Tweedles opened the shirt. Cecil clung with stiff fingers to the foot-board of the bed. Across the place where the waist-band would have been if there had been any, was the legend:



CECIL. A. FRASER

Cecil remembered in that dark moment that the pen had slipped and dribbled a blot on that particular shirt. The enormity of his offence seemed by that much more increased.

Uncle Lyman looked bewildered. Tweedles remained imperturbable.

"Is this my shirt?" asked the old man fretfully.

"Yes, sir. Of course, sir."

"Did you take it from the chiffonier where you keep my things?"

"Yes, sir."

"But see the name on it." An unsteady claw traced the damning name upon the shirt.

"It's your shirt, sir." There was a touch of malice in the cool voice of Tweedles.

"Isn't there some mistake, uncle?" said Cecil faintly. "Tweedles might have got mine among yours without noticing."

Tweedles looked up at Cecil and then down at Uncle Lyman. "It's your shirt, sir," he said to the old man. His tone was frigid and venomous.

Cecil was turned to stone.

"Very well, then," snapped the invalid. "Put it on, and don't bungle."

Cecil breathed a sigh. Evidently the weakened brain of the old man had not grasped the full significance of the affair. No doubt he would forget it without delay.

"Cecil, my good boy," chirped the old man when he was clothed—that is to say, half-clothed—"will you get me that writing-case on the table over there?"

"With pleasure, uncle," replied Cecil, bringing the case with alacrity. It was a pleasure to hear no more about shirts.

The old gentleman, propped up among his pillows, scrawled a few lines, and put the sheet of paper into an envelope, which he carefully sealed.

He lay back rather wearily, but his eyes were bright.

"Cecil," he said, "Tweedles is going to be rather busy this morning. He has some telephoning and other things to attend to, and I hate to trust important commissions to a messenger. Besides, a little walk will do you good. Will you do a last errand for your old uncle?"

"Delighted, Uncle Lyman," answered Cecil ambiguously. He took the letter in a firm young hand. With a quick glance he noted that it was directed to Mrs. Josephine Hammersley, 405 North Stuyvesant Street.

Our young hero set off complacently enough. His mind was almost at ease. It was clear that Uncle Lyman had forgotten and forgiven the episode of the

shirt. Nevertheless, Cecil admitted to himself that he had made a dangerous blunder. He must be more circumspect.

He found North Stuyvesant Street without much trouble. It was an unimposing thoroughfare lined with small shops. The errand on which he was going must be of no great importance.

Cecil looked about for Number 405. Then a sign upon a window brought him to a halt. It was:

MRS. JOSEPHINE HAMMERSLEY
SHIRTS

Below, in smaller letters, the world was informed that Mrs. Hammersley also offered for sale gentlemen's underwear, neckwear, and hose. The shop was that rather anomalous thing, a haberdashery kept by a woman.

Cecil stood outside and regarded the place with distrust. But there seemed to be nothing to do but go in. Mrs. Hammersley, who was alone in the shop, received him with courtesy. She was forty-five, but except in a few unessential particulars she looked younger. Her hair was suspiciously dark and glossy, and her cheeks were a rich red. She had a sharp eye, but its asperity was modified by a desire to please. She was becomingly dressed in dark blue serge with white collar and cuffs.

"I'm from Mr. Lyman Fraser," announced Cecil, with a nonchalance that even the consciousness of a correct nose could not make quite assured.

"Ah!" replied Mrs. Hammersley gravely, "then you must be the nephew."

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Cecil, not too politely. It irked him that this tradeswoman should be so well informed, and should speak of him without reverence.

"Your uncle has bought his shirts from me for seven years," the widow went on. "That is, he buys from Blutt's, but he always gives me the order."

"Yes, of course," said Cecil, trying to look as if he were cognizant of all his uncle's affairs.

"A very fine man, your uncle," added

Mrs. Hammersley with a sigh that seemed to contain a double regret. And then she asked briskly, "Wasn't that last lot of shirts satisfactory?"

"Oh, very!" responded Cecil enthusiastically. "That is, I think so. This probably has something to say about shirts." He had been drawing out the letter, which he now handed to the lady.

She took the letter and opened it, while Cecil looked superciliously about the shop. He would never patronize an insignificant place of this sort if he—that is, when he—

Then his eye fell upon Mrs. Hammersley. She had turned very red. She went through the brief epistle and turned white.

"He must be giving her a very large order," reflected Cecil. He waited, absorbed and silent.

The widow was looking at him, but as if she did not see him. There was a faraway aspect in her eye, an absent gaze of speculation. She walked to the window and looked out, twisting the letter in her hand. She went to the shelves and rearranged some boxes marked *Out-sizes*. At last she acknowledged the presence of the wondering Cecil.

"Tell him yes," she said shortly.

"Is that all?" asked Cecil. He was a little curious as to the number and quality involved in his uncle's order.

"It's enough," Mrs. Hammersley replied with the air of one who closes an interview.

She had grown red again, and seemed to have difficulty in getting her breath.

Cecil was vaguely disturbed, as he made his way back from North Stuyvesant Street.

"She says yes," he reported to his uncle.

"I thought she would," replied the old man, chuckling.

Cecil went and sat in the library to think things over. He sat a long time. He was not used to thinking, and the task consumed his energy.

Presently he was aware that something strange was going on in the house.

There was an unwonted stir; doors opened and closed. Walking to the window, Cecil saw a florist's wagon driving away. His heart leaped. Peeping into the hall, he beheld a flaming mass of American Beauty roses going upstairs with a pair of corduroy legs under them.

Cecil's heart contracted and then expanded with a rush that shook his frame. Masses of flowers meant one of two things—but that color! If they had been white—

He was aroused from his stupefaction by Tweedles, whose grim exterior was inscrutable. "Your uncle wishes you in his bedroom, sir."

Cecil went swiftly up the stairs, and entered his uncle's room.

It was high noon. The blinds were open, and sunlight was pouring in, over roses and violets and even orchids. Two strange men were at Uncle Lyman's bedside. Deducting rapidly from a round collar and a green bag, Cecil inferred that they were a minister and a lawyer.

"Ah, Cecil, there you are!" cried Uncle Lyman, with a feeble grin.

Cecil did not have time to reply, for just then there was a rustle at the door, and in walked Mrs. Hammersley, still very red, and attired in a hasty elegance of brown satin. She was accompanied by a tremulous old lady in a nondescript costume of rusty black.

The clergyman stepped forward and took Mrs. Hammersley by her white-gloved hand, leading her to the bedside of Uncle Lyman. The tremulous old lady followed close behind.

Cecil stood petrified.

The clergyman opened a book, and began droning something through his nose. Cecil's head went round. He heard his uncle and Mrs. Hammersley making low responses.

Then, before he knew what was happening, Cecil was writing his name be-

side the illegible scrawl of the tremulous old lady, on a document that contained a great deal more beside the word *Witnesses*, pointed out to him by the skinny finger of the clergyman.

There was some incoherent chatter afterward, and a nervous titter from the bride.

"How the telephone does simplify things!" remarked Uncle Lyman from his pillow. He beckoned with an unsteady claw to his dazed nephew. "My dear boy," he said suavely, "Tweedles has something to say to you in your room. Your aunt, Mrs. Fraser, will give me the best of care, I am sure. She and this gentleman (he indicated the lawyer) and I have a little matter to settle."

Cecil walked blindly to his room. Tweedles was there before him.

"Your uncle asked me to give you this," said Tweedles, "and to wish you a pleasant journey back to Binghamton." He held out a twenty-dollar bill and a five. Cecil's fingers closed mechanically upon the money, but his lip quivered. "And you are to have the two dozen shirts," Tweedles went on, looking straight before him—"that is to say, sir, it's twenty-three."

"It certainly is," remarked Cecil bitterly.

He seized his bag, which had been packed by the thoughtful Tweedles. A pile of shirts lay upon the bed. Tweedles indicated them with a large red hand. "And where shall I send the shirts, sir?"

"Send them to the devil," replied Cecil with warmth.

"Yes, sir; very good, sir. Your address is in your uncle's book, sir."

The subsequent career of Cecil Fraser I leave to its obscurity. He has never shined as a rotten working man. In judging him, dear reader, remember his youth and his temptation. And his mother, who had named him Cecil.



THE ANTI-CLIMAX

By William F. Jenkins

JOHNNY is the sort of person who does physical culture exercises before he goes to bed. Kitty is the sort of person you find being interviewed for newspapers and magazines by sob-sisters and elderly maiden ladies with Victorian sentimentality and very slight penetration. She had a genius for a press-agent. His name, by the way, was Bill. She was known to the public because of the fact that she was one of the most accomplished sniffers on the American stage and from the efforts of the press-agent aforesaid.

How Johnny met her is immaterial. He considered her interesting however, because she was doubtful how to talk to him and hit on the subject of woman suffrage. Johnny was opposed to woman suffrage, but thought women should be interested in such things, and promptly asked if he might call to talk it over. He was no gilded youth, though he had the gilt, and she said he might. Kitty's interest in suffrage had led her to read two magazine articles on it and announce her conversion to the cause. It was good for three interviews. When Johnny did call, he had a small volume of Rabindranath Tagore in his pocket, and during the afternoon he read to her the poem beginning, "On the slope of the desolate river among tall grasses. * * *" and so on. It is a beautiful thing, and Johnny read it well. When he finished she strangled her fifth yawn just in time. During the afternoon he also read her a number of other poems.

I decline to attempt to write a love story, and therefore I shall carefully omit an analysis of the motives which prompted her to make Johnny fall in

love with her. I shall also not describe the means. But fall in love with her he did, and thoroughly. He had been in love with her for quite three weeks before she remarked that as soon as her husband got his decree she intended to marry Bill, her press-agent. Then Johnny identified her with the dubious Kitty Malone, whose matrimonial and other adventures were beloved of small-town-sports, revivalists, and magazine section editors. Before, he had idealized her unmercifully and had quite decided to marry her. But now— Marriage with Kitty was really out of the question for him. He had always an abhorrence for second-hand objects, and Kitty had already had four husbands, and apparently contemplated a fifth.

He took it very much to heart. For a while he meditated upon the dramatic charm of permitting the experience to embitter him, and becoming thenceforth a cynic. Had he dined decently the night before and his mental attitude that morning been one of irritation, this is undoubtedly what would have happened. But Johnny, like most stupid folk, was very virtuous, and had dined not well but too wisely. The penalty of his virtue was an excellent appetite which he had sated with waffles. Some day an enterprising psychologist will prepare a brochure upon the effect of foods on the emotions. Not having leisure to discuss this at length, I merely pause to point out that waffles, eaten in sufficient quantities, produce a mental attitude of noble, gentle, melancholy. There are two sorts of melancholy. Johnny's fastened upon his convictions and he decided that this world held nothing more for him. Believing firm-

ly in a future life and having incompletely digested the waffles, he determined upon suicide. He made his plans with care. He had no immediate family and his business affairs were at no time under his control, and would consequently not be affected by his untimely demise, so he prepared for euthanasia. He arranged an elaborate story and went into a drug-store to buy cyanide. To his relief, a preparation was sold him without question. He returned to his rooms, poured out a stiff dose, and copied out in a fair hand the Tagore poem, "I have got my leave, Bid me farewell, my brothers. I bow to you and take my leave, * * " He sat beside the telephone, swallowed the concoction, and called up Kitty.

To my great regret I am unable to relate the conversation. From Johnny I can learn nothing, while Kitty will not bear that the subject be mentioned. All that can be definitely said is that Kitty made him ring off, called up four news-

papers, announced that she was prostrated with grief over the death of her admirer, who had expired at her feet, swearing he could not live without her love, and then arranged for six new gowns of very subdued design.

Really, it was very careless of Johnny. Her beautiful publicity campaign was spoiled, her six gowns rendered utterly useless, and a properly melodramatic finish to this story prevented by his lack of care. He hung up the 'phone, leaned back in his chair, and lit a cigarette. He felt himself turning pale, and cold sweat upon his brow. He felt slightly ill. He glanced at the bottle from which he had taken his fatal drink, and then he realized; that with his farewell written, Kitty's picture by his side and the evening papers notified; that he was not going to die. The bottle was not labeled *cyanide*—it was labeled *germicide*. He examined his symptoms and knew what he was going to do. *He was going to be seasick.*



LETHE

By John Myers O'Hara

SO noiselessly it flowed he scarcely knew
If such could be, a little space away,
Shadow or river stealing dimly through
The ashen day.

He stood a-brooding while beside the brink,
Then made a cup, with palms that curved as one,
To hold the water while his heart should drink
Oblivion.

But from the wave he saw her eyes of dream,
Sad as the past's remorseless mirror framed,
Look upward into his, and from the stream
He slunk ashamed.



A PLAIN woman takes pride in her friends, a beautiful woman in her enemies.



AND IN THE NAME OF CRITICISM

By George Jean Nathan

THERE has come recently before my notice a volume called "Another Book on the Theater" (*Huebsch*), by one Mr. George Jean Nathan, a writer on matters theatrical for THE SMART SET and other periodicals several, a volume containing a so large measure of profane nonsense that a revelation of its contents cannot but prove advantageous in the safeguarding from its purchase of such persons as have not already been misled by certain suspiciously favourable reviews (indubitably prejudiced) and so victimized.

Who this Mr. Nathan is, I cannot from personal knowledge say. His photographs show him to be a rather handsome fellow of, say, thirty-three or thirty-four—but with a face of peculiarly sinister character. Not the sort of man, one would say, whom one would care to encounter in an alley on a dark night. Yet let me iterate that I do not desire here to libel the fellow. It is the man's work, not himself, which must properly concern us. And so, though as I have said the creature's look possesses an intangible something to inspire distrust—there is something almost brutal in the eerie droop of his left eye—let us confine ourselves to an absolutely impartial diagnosis of his labours.

The records show that, previous to the volume on the theater which I shall shortly appraise, this Nathan has written seven books: three, in English, on the drama ("The Recrudescence of the Unities in Calderon," "The Drama in Central Asia," and "Molière or Roda Roda?"); one, in French, on zoology ("L'Evangile de la Zoologie"); one, in English, on philosophy ("The Dimen-

sions of the Occult"); one, in German, on the comprehensive collection of rare postage stamps owned by the Graf Heinrich Louis von Mecklenburg; and one, in English, on the night life of the foreign capitals, "Europe After 8:15"—the latter in collaboration with the Messrs. Mencken and Wright. The merit or demerit of these volumes is not the question before me. I am, as I have said, engaged alone with the latest idiosyncrasies of the gentleman, idiosyncrasies which he seems evidently pleased to regard as (spare the mark!) theatrical criticism.

Before proceeding to a disclosure of the superficial methods of ratiocination employed by this buffo as instanced in his "Another Book on the Theater," let me quote some samples of his style—excerpts selected at random from his writings through the last theatrical season, excerpts which will clearly illustrate the flippancy of the fellow and his lack of respect for all that is noble and worth-while in the theater of our Broadway:

I

Broadway playwright—one who possesses the ability to compress the most interesting episodes in several characters' lifetimes into two uninteresting hours.

II

The art of emotional acting, on Broadway, consists in expressing (1) *doubt* or *puzzlement* by scratching the head; (2) *surprise* by taking a sudden step backwards; (3) *grief*, by turning the back to audience and bowing head; (4) *determination* (if standing), by thrusting handkerchief back into breast

pocket, brushing hair back from forehead with a quick sweep of hand and buttoning lower button of sack coat; (5) *determination* (if seated), by looking fixedly at audience for a moment and then suddenly standing up; (6) *despair*, by rumpling hair, sinking upon sofa, reaching over to table, pouring out stiff drink of whiskey and swallowing it at one gulp; (7) *impatience*, by walking quickly up stage, then down, taking cigarette from case, lighting it and throwing it immediately into grate, walking back up stage again and then down; (8) *relief*, by taking deep breath, exhaling quickly and mopping off face with handkerchief; and (9) *fear*, by having smeared face with talcum powder!

III

The leading elements in the Broadway humour, in the order of their popularity: (1) speculation as to how the Venus di Milo lost her arms, and (2) what she was doing with them when she lost them.

IV

Broadway actors may in the main be divided into two groups: those who pronounce it burgular and those whom one cannot hear anyway back of the second row.

V

An actor is great in proportion to his power to move audiences. The Broadway theatrical manager is therefore a great actor. For truly he has, with prodigious effect, moved audiences. He has moved them all out of the theater.

VI

The Syllogism of the Broadway Drama

1. Someone loves someone.
2. Someone interposes.
3. Someone is outwitted, someone marries someone, and someone gets two dollars.

VII

Such critics as contend that litera-

ture is one thing and drama another, are apparently of the notion that literature is something that consists mainly of long words and allusions to Châteaubriand, and drama something that consists mainly of monosyllables and allusions to William J. Burns.

VIII

The test supreme of all acting is the coincidental presence upon the stage of a less competent actress who is twice as good-looking.

IX

Author—a noun used to designate the person who, in response to the applause at a Broadway première, comes out upon the stage after the second act in a conspicuously new "Tuxedo" and talks as if he had written a play.

X

Program—a pamphlet which assures the audience that the theater is disinfected of germs with CN Disinfectant and that the play is disinfected of drama with actors.

XI

A Thumb-nail Critique—The plays which, in the last two decades, have in the United States made the most money: "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Way Down East," "The Old Homestead," "Ben Hur" and "Peg o' My Heart." The plays which, in the last two decades, have, in the United States, made the least money: "The Thunderbolt," "Strife," "The Three Daughters of M. Dupont," "The Incubus," and "General John Regan."

XII

Mind-reader—a vaudeville performer who imagines the members of a vaudeville audience have minds to read.

XIII

The unities of the Belasco drama: time, place and (legal) action.

XIV

Constructive critic: one who builds up the newspaper's theatrical advertising revenue.

XV

The producers of our two-dollar music shows are rapidly gobbling up all the vaudeville actors. This will immeasurably help vaudeville.

XVI

The circuses will soon go into winter quarters. They cannot compete with the drama leagues.

XVII

The world may be divided thus: actors and dramatic critics. The only difference between them is that the former do their acting on a platform.

XVIII

Shakespeare's plays fall into two distinct groups: those written by Shakespeare and those acted by Beerbohm Tree.

Need I give you a more lucid estimate of this Nathan, of his glib posturings, of his (as the scholarly critic of the *Cool Creek, New Mexico, Argus* has so scintillatingly put it) "trying to hide his not having real knowledge by writing smart-aleckisms"? Or as my esteemed colleague, Dr. Arthur P. Wunk, professor of dramatic literature and swimming in the Sioux City Central High School, has so brilliantly expressed it, "his misguided belief that there is a place in logic for what Marguerite Gautier yclept cleverness." Were this Nathan, however, really clever, 'twould be a different matter. But he is not. His so-called cleverness is merely the shoddy species of cheap humour practised by such low comedy Gobbos as disport themselves in the columns of the *Boston Transcript* and by such professional theatrical joke-mongers as Professor Brander Mat-

thews, Professor Richard Burton of the Drama League of America, and the like—men who are ever ready to sacrifice the truth for a phrase that will elicit a grin.

As against theatrical writers of the type represented by this Mr. George Jean Nathan (let me repeat here, however, that I know nothing of the fellow from personal knowledge: I know merely that his photographs show him to be a rather handsome fellow of, say, thirty-three or thirty-four)—as against theatrical writers of this type, we should indeed be grateful for having, by way of antidote, such truly observing, intelligent, and dignified critics of the drama as, for example, Prof. Franklin W. Chandler ("Aspects of Modern Drama") who safeguard our national morals and national art by denouncing with vigour the dramaturgy of Schnitzler, Donnay, Wedekind, Gorky, and the obscene like, and who inform us thus luminously about the ending of "Candida": "Eugene departs, cured of his infatuation after having received from Candida a maternal kiss upon the brow." Such masterly constructive critics, in further example, as Miss Elizabeth R. Hunt, of the Drama League, who, in "On the Reading of Plays," observe, acutely: "My experience goes to show that a play should be read *after* seeing it interpreted on the stage. This is the ideal time, not only for ease and satisfaction in reading, but for the fullest measure of enjoyment in seeing the piece again in the theater." Such critics, in still further illustration, as the erudite Mr. Percival Chubb, of the Drama League, whose brilliant paper on the Shakespeare tercentenary ("The Drama," August, 1915) I may recall to you with a quotation of this excellent critic's observation (page 535), "Perhaps the simplest form of celebrating the tercentenary possible is that of a tree-planting, with appropriate ceremonies. This was suggested and is being promoted by the Shakespeare Club of Toledo, the director of which, Mrs. Robert Carlton Morris, 2648 Kirkwood Lane, Toledo, Ohio, will be glad

to furnish information *and advice* in the matter. The tree might be in a public park or in a school yard, or garden, and beside it a memorial bench might be placed. . . . Allied to this is the proposal to arrange for the making of an old English garden in which as many as possible of the flowers mentioned in Shakespeare's plays shall be grown." Or, as better antidote still to such pseudo-clever theatrical writers of the Nathan school, such critics of sound and sober judgment as Mr. Huntly Carter, also of the Drama League, who, in "Instruments of the Drama," an admirable brochure, makes the keen comment, "Given an Ibsen free of culture and we have the ideal author. What Ibsen *knew* did not matter; what he *felt* was of first-class importance!"

These persons are critics. True, one may not necessarily agree with everything they say, but none can deny their fine sincerity, their impassioned endeavour to uplift and better the stage, their upright and serious intention. Are they, like this Nathan person, mere intentional comedians? No, they are not. And if perchance some of their more sophisticated readers find them comedians, it is at least to the credit of these earnest commentators on the drama that their comedy, however fine, is absolutely, wholly, entirely and comprehensively unintentional.

On the other hand, let us regard again more of this Nathan's anticings. I cull from his bleatings at random:

I

Dramatic criticism—The theory that one is more interested in the devices with which a woman makes herself beautiful—cold creams, mascara, false hair, eyebrow pencils, lip rouge, face powder, dental floss, whale-bone, curl papers, et cetera—than in the beautiful woman herself.

II

Something seemingly never remembered by dramatists when writing love scenes: the more a young woman really

loves a man the less talkative, the more silent, she is in his presence. . . . Only women over thirty are chatty before the object of their affection.

III

The proficient actor is one who can completely immerse his own personality in the rôle he is playing. The star actor is one who can completely immerse the rôle he is playing in his own personality.

IV

Although it may have absolutely nothing to do with the case, I yet believe that, in a romantic stage rôle, no actress can possibly be convincing or persuasive if she is able in private life to eat tripe, chicken livers, calves' brains or a thick steak.

V

Maurice Donnay, the talented gentleman of Gallic dramatic letters, observes, "The French dramatists treat of love because it is the only subject which every member of the audience understands, and a dramatist must, of course, appeal to the masses." Which, in another way, may account for the great appeal and success in America of crook plays.

VI

When a critic refers to a male actor's "authority," the betting odds are generally thirty to one that what he has done is to mistake for that quality the aforesaid actor's *embonpoint*.

VII

Mr. George P. Goodale, a good citizen and an honest taxpayer, was lately accorded a great banquet in honor of his fifty years of continuous service as dramatic critic to the *Detroit Free Press*. At the banquet, it was said, repeated, and emphasized that, in all his half-century as a critic of the drama, Mr. Goodale had never made a single

enemy. Where, than in this banquet and its import, a smarter satire on the American notion of what constitutes dramatic criticism?

VIII

The hero of a Broadway play may not be bald. This would seem, in the Broadway drama, to be the first rule of heroism and, with heroism, of intelligence and appeal. So, Julius Cæsar, Bismarck, George Washington, Napoleon and Shakespeare would be low villains.

IX

It is a favourite challenge of the average Broadway playwright to the dramatic critic that if the latter knows so much about plays, why doesn't he write one himself. The same question might be asked of the average Broadway playwright.

X

The financial success of the Broadway play is conditioned on the proportion of theatergoers who believe that singeing keeps the hair from falling out and that the American Indians were accustomed to use the word "heap" before every adjective. The last season was the most successful Broadway has known in years.

XI

It took Molière and Sheridan, as it now takes Shaw and Bahr, years to fashion their comedies. And yet, when all is said and done, what is funnier, what provokes a louder laughter, than the mere articulation of the name Gustav?

XII

Literature is an art wherein one observes the effects of the thematic action upon the protagonist's mind. Drama is an art wherein one observes the effects of the thematic action upon the protagonist's heart. Burlesque is an art wherein one observes the effects of the thematic action upon the protagonist's trousers-seat.

XIII

"*Trying it on the dog*"—a phrase referring to the trying out of a play in the provinces before bringing it into the metropolis. In other words, testing the effect of the play upon an intelligent community to predetermine, by its lack of success there, its subsequent prosperity in New York.

XIV

The so-called "laughs" in an American musical show must, if they would "get over," be devised in such a manner and constructed of such basic materials that they shall be within the scope of the intelligence of persons who can neither read nor write. This is why nine-tenths of the persons in a Broadway audience fall out of their chairs with mirth when anybody on the stage refers to whiskers as alfalfa or when a character is named the *Duc de Gorgonzola*.

XV

Royalties.—The percentage of the gross receipts which playwrights get from producers, after lawsuits.

XVI

The critic who believes that such a thing as a repertory company is artistically possible believes that a dozen modern actors, assembled into one group, are sufficiently talented and skilled to interpret satisfactorily a dozen plays. The critic who does not believe that such a thing as a repertory company is artistically possible knows that a dozen modern actors, assembled into one group, are insufficiently talented and skilled to interpret satisfactorily even one play.

XVII

It is the custom in many New York theaters to ring a bell in the lobby so as to warn the persons congregated there that the curtain is about to go up on the next act and that it is time for

them to go back into the theater. But it still remains for an enterprising impresario to make a fortune by ringing a bell in the theater so as to warn the persons congregated there that the curtain is about to go up on the next act and that it is time for them to go back into the lobby!

XVIII

Farces fall into two classes: those in which the leading male character implores "Let me explain!" and the leading female character tartly replies, "That's the best thing you do," and those in which the leading male character's evening dress socks have white clocks on them.

XIX

Mr. Florenz Ziegfeld succeeds with his shows because he addresses his chief appeal to the eye. Mr. George M. Cohan succeeds with his because he addresses his chief appeal to the ear. The impresarios of the Fourteenth Street burlesque shows succeed with theirs because they address their chief appeal to the nose.

XX

The one big ambition of nine out of every ten American playwrights is, in the argot of the theater, to "get over the footlights." The one big ambition of nine out of every ten audiences is exactly the same!

XXI

Most so-called optimistic comedies are based on the theory that a cup of coffee improves in proportion to the number of lumps of sugar one puts into it.

XXII

Opening Night.—The night before the play is ready to open.

Of what good, of what benefit, is such stuff? Does it help the theater

in any way? As against illicit fooleries of this sort, consider the work of such a critic as Mr. William Winter who, throughout his long and brilliant career, worked ceaselessly for the betterment of our stage by urging the suppression from our theater of the dramaturgy of such foreign objectionables as Pinero, Brieux, Hauptmann, de Curel, Capus, Sudermann and Strindberg and such native germ-breeders as Walter, Sheldon and Knoblauch. Or the ardent and loyal labours of such critics as Mr. Charlton Andrews (of whom more at a later day) who has so sagely observed, "It is obvious that the most effective scenes in a play will be those in which the contending forces are displayed in actual grapple," and again "The plot of a play is the story, the series of unified happenings having a beginning, a middle and an end, which forms the framework of the play."

The pity is that this Nathan does not see his way clear to utilize what talents he has in a different and more tonic direction and manner. For that the fellow is possessed of certain talents, albeit comparatively minor ones, I deem it not altogether fair to him to deny. What knowledge he has of the theater and of drama, however, he is apparently content to outrage in motley. Worse still, I doubt that the creature is sincere; his every sentence, his every observation, carries with it a sense of the *poseur*. For example, among other things, he says, with an amusing bumpiousness, "That it is a simple matter to write a serviceable book of dramatic criticism, I believe I proved recently in the instance of *Another Book on the Theater*. But that it is a somewhat more difficult matter serviceably to criticize such a volume has, I believe, been proved subsequently in the instance of the critics of that book. This, however, but bears out what I have frequently contended: that it is often less difficult to do than to criticize. Anyone may write a book of dramatic criticism—many, many very good ones to this bear ample testimony

—but it is given to few, indeed, intelligently to criticize such a work. Nine book vivisectionists out of ten, laying to a volume on the theater, proceed upon the cryptic assumption that, whereas the theater is an institution of amusement, nothing written about the theater should in itself be amusing. This attitude, of course, is an attitude peculiar alone to our own neighbourhood, wherein criticism is rated and held holy in accordance with the vigour of its adherence to and further substantiation of the commonly accepted theories."

The fellow, obviously, mistakes impertinence for pertinence. In testimony I quote several of his effusions:

I

The chief dramatic situation in "The Road to Happiness" consists of a hero who, with hand on hip pocket, defies the assembled villains to advance so much as an inch at peril of their lives and, having thus held them at bay, proceeds to pull out a handkerchief, flick his nostril and make his getaway. The chief comic situation in "Arizona," produced many years ago, consisted of the same thing, save that a whiskey flask or a plug of tobacco—I forget which—was used in place of a nose-doily. Thus, little boys and girls, has our serious drama advanced.

II

Derivations

First-Nighter.—From *Fürst* (German for "prince") and the English word *nitre* (KNO_3 : a chemical used in the manufacture of gunpowder); hence, a prince of gunpowder, or, in simpler terms, someone who makes a lot of noise.

Manager.—From the Anglo-Saxon word "manger," the "a" having been deleted in order that the word might be shortened, and so used more aptly for purposes of swearing. *Manager* thus comes from "manger," something which provides fodder for the jackasses in the stalls.

III

It is being argued that the public taste is improving and, in evidence, there is being quoted the circumstance that Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's presentations of Shakespeare's "Henry VIII" and "Merchant of Venice" have made a great deal of money. The minor circumstance that Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's presentations of Shakespeare's "Henry VIII" and "Merchant of Venice" are exceptionally poor presentations has seemingly not occurred to anyone.

IV

Practically speaking, it is reasonable to believe that the public doesn't want gloom in the theater not because it *is* gloom, not because of the gloom itself, but for the very good reason that gloom isn't generally interesting. Let a playwright make gloom as interesting as happiness and the public will want it theatrically. But the gloom of the drama is, more often than not, uninteresting gloom. In illustration: Take two street-corner orators. Suppose both are talking, one a block away from the other, on precisely the same topic. It is a gloom topic. For instance, the question of the large number of starving unemployed. One of the orators hammers away at his audience with melancholy statistics and all the other depressing elements of his subject. The other, equally serious, makes his points, not alone as does the first orator with blue figures, but with light comparisons and saucy illustrations. Which is the more interesting? Which gets the larger crowd? Which convinces? Take a second and correlated illustration. Two weekly magazines print articles on, let us say, the work of organized charity in its attempt to relieve the community's paupers. In itself, not particularly jocose reading matter. One of the two magazines, in its treatment of the story, has its general tone exemplified by some such sentence as, "Last month the charity organizations of New York supplied

the poor of the city with 30,000 loaves of bread." The other magazine, expressing the same thought and facts, has its sentence phrased thus: "Last month the charity organizations of New York supplied the poor of the city with 30,000 loaves of bread, an amount almost 8,000 in excess of all the bread eaten during the same space of time by Mr. Diamond Jim Brady in the ten leading Broadway restaurants." Which magazine has the bigger circulation?

The conventional treatment of gloomy themes in the drama is like the ancient tale of the proud old coon who, driving a snail-paced and ramshackle horse and an even more ramshackle buggy down a Southern road used largely by automobilists, suddenly perceived a small boy hitching on behind. "Hey!" exclaimed the old brunette, "Yoh look out dar! Ef yoh ain't careful yoh'll be sucked under!" The mechanic of the gloomy dramatic theme, like the old dinge, too often takes his theme too pompously, too seriously. And is generally sucked under himself as a result. Clyde Fitch took a so-called gloomy theme in his play "The Climbers"—the play that started bang off with a funeral—but his play is still going with the public in the stock companies because he didn't let the gloom of his story run away with the interest. The final curtain line in "The Shadow" is: "After all, real happiness is often to be found in tears." Tears are often provocative of a greater so-called "up-lift" feeling than mere grins and laughter. Take a couple or more illustrations of the most popular mob plays America has known, say, "Way Down East," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "The Old Homestead." These, fundamentally, are what the mob calls "sad" plays. The yokelry would ever rather pay for the privilege of crying than laughing. What farce ever made as much money as "East Lynne"? The tears in "Cinderella" have made it the world's most successful theatrical property.

V

The difference 'twixt tragedy and

comedy is the difference of a hair's breadth. Tragedy ends with the hero's death. Comedy, with the hero's getting married.

VI

To be effective, acting must interpret not so much the playwright's work as the audience's silent criticism of that work.

VII

. . . It is to be remarked that the New Movement in the theater, about which we hear so much, what with its scenery, lighting, stage architecture and what not, seems to concern everything but drama.

Thus the flippant Nathan, George Jean. Of course, say what one will against the fellow, one must yet (to indulge in the deplorable vernacular) admire the way in which he gets away with it. But why the editors of such a respectable magazine as *THE SMART SET* should give over their valuable pages to so antic a pen-pushers and permit him to mislead the public for his own delectation and to his own prosperity is a matter at once one of mystery and lament. And not only the editors of *THE SMART SET* (one of whom is said to be Mr. Nathan's greatest admirer), but as well the editors of other magazines and newspapers—to say nothing of such reputable publishers as Mr. B. W. Huebsch, to whom the public is indebted for several really good books on the drama.

Another point. Nathan's frequent endeavour to invest his opinions with a semblance of authenticity by substantiating them with quotations from the works of inferentially well-known but actually obscure (and very possibly mythical) philosophers, jurists, numismatists, obstetricians, professors, Subway guards, biographers and critics. Who, let me ask Mr. Nathan to explain, for example is Dr. P. Blott, Professor of Applied Ethics and Symmetrical Aesthetics in the University of Belgrade, a gentleman whose

opinions he so frequently cites. Or Professor Arnold de W. Cowperthwait, from whose critical study "The Evolution of the Second Art Form and Its Attendant Consequences," he also so often quotes.

Reading further into "Another Book on the Theater" (at all the principal bookshops, \$1.50 net), one is struck by the author's excessive employment of big and mysterious words. I observe, for example, such morsels as "homoousian," "asyzygetic," "carcinomorpha," "nematoscolicine" and "pectinibranchiata." Does Nathan actually know what these words (if, in truth, such words exist!) mean? Or does he not merely think to give his writing an air of culture by dropping them every once in a while into his text? Such stratagems, in place of rendering clear his meanings, did he but know it but assist in obfuscating them. Yet this, after all, is probably to be desired. Anything that will obfuscate Nathan's writings must be regarded as welcome, indeed. Consider, for example, how delightful it would be had Nathan so drenched in exotic polysyllables the following typical opinions as to render them even less intelligible to intelligent readers than they are at present:

I

The moving pictures will never supplant the spoken drama, contend a thousand and one critics. Well, anyway, not so long as the drama is being spoken as it is to-day in the majority of our Broadway theaters.

II

Madame Karsavina of the Russian Ballet seeks in her chorographic pantomimes to interpret drama with the body. The Boston censors commanded that Madame Karsavina, who in her chorographic pantomimes seeks to interpret drama with the body, completely conceal her body in heavy draperies. The Boston censors may be expected next to command Mimi Aguglia, of the Sicilian Players, who seeks to interpret

the body in terms of drama, to undress.

III

Comedy is but tragedy, cunningly disguised and popularized for the multitude.

IV

Men go to the theater to forget; women, to remember.

V

Melodrama is that form of drama in which the characters are deliberately robbed of a sense of humour by the author. Problem drama, most often, that form in which the characters are deliberately robbed of a sense of humour by the audience.

VI

How awfully ashamed of themselves Galsworthy and Shaw, Molnar and Brieux, Hauptmann and Wedekind must feel when they read a book on dramatic technique by a member of the Drama League!

VII

The error committed by the critic who, night after night, goes to the theater in an attitude of steadfast seriousness and in such attitude reviews what he beholds therein lies in his confounding of the presentation with the institution. His respectful attitude toward the presentation is, therefore, under current conditions eight times in ten a direct insult to the institution.

VIII

It is infinitely more simple to write plays than to criticize them. In proof of which (1) rattle off quickly the names of twelve good dramatists and then (2) try to rattle off with equal speed and facility the name of one good dramatic critic.

SAVONAROLAS A-SWEAT

By H. L. Mencken

I

ONE William T. Ellis, an author, lately filled the *Bulletin* of the Authors' League with moving bellows against a publisher, alleging atrocities of the classical sort, but worse. The name of this Ellis arrests me; I seem to remember him as one who loves his fellow men to distraction, and gallops to save them from hell for modest honoraria. Isn't he the same, in fact, who is staff expert in piety to the Philadelphia *North American*, that loveliest flower of consecrated journalism? Isn't he Ellis the jitney Savonarola, the eminent wholesaler in Sunday-school lessons, the endless perspirer for the Uplift, the author of "Men and Missions" and other great doxological works? Isn't he the ecstatic one who hymned the late vice crusade in lascivious Atlanta—now, alas, almost forgotten!—as "more fun than a fleet of air-ships," and urged the moral sportsmen of other towns to go to it? I suspect that he is, and if so I have venerated him for years. Let a tear fall for him. If he does not gild his tale of woe, his hornswoggling was cruel, indeed. . . .

But enough of this grand young man. He appears in the chronicle only incidentally, and as complaining of his royalties on his *magnum opus*, "Billy Sunday: the Man and His Message." This great critical biography, he says, has sold 300,000 copies within a year! —and is still going like Coca-Cola in "dry" Georgia! . . . Har, har, me luds! Where are your best-sellers now? What becomes of McCutcheon, MacGrath, Chambers, the Glyn? Who will now whisper the figures for "Pollyanna,"

"Trilby," "Eben Holden," "Dora Thorne"? More, this Ellis tome is but one of several on the same subject. I have another before me; it is "The Real Billy Sunday," by the Rev. Dr. Ram's Horn Brown (*Revell*), and if the signs and portents go for anything, it has sold even better than the Ellis book. The plates, indeed, show signs of usage; it has been rolled off by the hundred thousand. And in the city where I bought it, just outside the gates of Dr. Sunday's vast arena of God, the official bookseller told me that it was the best-seller of them all, and worth ten times the dollar that he asked for it.

Nevertheless, the fellow had a heart and so offered me *lagniappe*. He was sworn on the Four Gospels, he said, to sell the book for no less than a dollar, but if I would take it without parley, passing over the Ellis book, he would give me something instructive as make-weight. This something as make-weight turned out to be a gaudy pamphlet entitled "Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls, or, War on the White Slave Trade," by Ernest A. Bell, "secretary of the Illinois Vigilance Association, superintendent of Midnight Missions, etc." Another great tussler for rectitude. The Ellis, no doubt, of Cook county. The beyond-Parkhurst. But himself, it would appear, rather daring, and to the evil-minded, perhaps even somewhat racy. Several of the full-page half-tones give us flaming views of brothel parlors, with the resident staff at persiflage with the visiting fireman; another shows the exterior of "a gilded palace of sin," with a stained glass *porte-cochère*; yet another (a photograph) shows a plump *geisha*, in skirts almost as short as a *débutante*'s,

in the lewd act of plaiting her hair. In a fourth appears "the white slave clearing-house," with a gospel meeting going on across the street. In a fifth we are introduced to a lady uplifter "pleading with a lost one to give up her sinful life," the "lost one" being by far the better looking. In a sixth we see a white slave trader plying his abominable arts upon a simple country girl in an ice-cream parlor. In a seventh—

But I spare you any further carnalities in effigy. The text of the work is horrifying enough. Not only Dr. Bell himself, but various other virtuosi, each of learning and cunning, encourage the popping eyeball. One of them is the Hon. Edwin W. Sims, district attorney in Chicago during the palmy days of the white slave uproar, and secretary to the immortal Chicago Vice Commission, whose report was barred from the mails by super-uplifters at Washington. The unctuous Sims protests that he has "strong personal feelings against appearing in print in connection with a subject so abhorrent," but swallows them in order to warn all country girls that "the ordinary ice-cream parlor is very likely to be a spider's web." Another "expert" is Principal D. F. Sutherland, "of Red Water, Texas," who tells the sad story of the kidnapping of Estelle Ramon, of Kentucky, and of her rescue by the valiant William Scott, an old beau. Many more are mentioned on the title-page, but I fail to find their contributions inside. The explanation appears in an advertisement on the back cover. This advertisement shows that the present volume is no more than a sort of bait or pilot for a larger work of the same title, the which sells to connoisseurs at a dollar and a half. ("Fastest selling book of the age! Agents wanted! Write for terms and outfit!") A chance for the young gentlemen of the Y. M. C. A. to dedicate themselves to Service. Pornography for the plain people. . . . Too late, alas, too late! The copyright of the oleaginous Bell is dated 1910. That was the golden age of vice crusading, the year of unparalleled harvests for the snout-

ing fraternity. To-day only the old-fashioned believe in white slavery; there are other bugaboos for the progressive. No wonder Dr. Sunday's bookseller was so free with his *lagniappe!* . . .

As for the actual Sunday book, dated 1914, it already tells an old story, for the sweating doctor has since done such press-agenting as not even a whole library of books could do, and his public eminence in these States is scarcely less exalted than that of Col. Roosevelt, Jess Willard, Henry Ford and the Kaiser. Dr. Horn-Brown reviews his career in phrases of laudation—a career of double distinction, for he was a celebrated baseball-player before he became the American St. Paul. (Joseph Smith, William Miller, Mary Baker G. Eddy, John Alexander Dowie, Sam Jones, William A. Sunday: we have produced some noble theologians!). His paternal grandfather was a Pennsylvania Dutchman named Sontag, but on the distaff side he stems from Lord William Corey, "who married the only daughter of Sir Francis Drake." The family of Corey de Pittsburgh de Reno is apparently the *jüngerer Linie*. Bill, our present hero, was converted in Chicago, at the Pacific Garden Mission, in 1886 or thereabout, and after getting clear of his baseball contracts became assistant secretary of the Chicago Y. M. C. A. Then he got a job as advance man for J. Wilbur Chapman, an itinerant evangelist. When Chapman retired, in 1896, Sunday took over his trade, and has since gone steadily ahead. For fifteen years he worked the watertanks, snaring the sinful tobacco chewers for the heavenly choir. Then he struck out for bigger game, and today he performs only in the main centers of population. He has saved Philadelphia, Baltimore, Kansas City and Pittsburgh; he is headed for Boston, Chicago and New York. He has been lavishly praised by the President of the United States, is a Free-mason and a Doctor of Divinity, and has enjoyed the honor of shaking me by the hand.

So much for the facts of his career, and the book of Dr. Horn-Brown. In

laborious preparation for the review of that book I went to hear the whooping doctor himself. I found him vastly more interesting than any tome that these old eyes have rested upon in many a day. He was engaged, as I entered his vast bull-ring for the first time, in trying to scare a delegation of Civil War veterans into some realization, however faint, of the perils of hell, and when I took my seat in the pen reserved for the *literati*, directly under the eaves of his pulpit, I was sprinkled copiously with the dew of his frenzy. On it came, dribble, dribble, splash, splash, every time he executed one of his terrifying revolutions. It was like holding the bottle for a Russian dancer with a wet sponge strapped to his head. Of a sudden he would rush to the edge of the platform—his pulpit is as long as a bar-room, but is without rails—, scream hysterically, and then bring himself up with a jolt and spin 'round like a top, his arms flung out and saline globules leaping from his brow in a pelting shower. He shed, I daresay, at least eight ounces of sweat between 7.45 and 9.00 P. M., and though he mopped his brow constantly and tried to be polite, a good deal of it escaped into the air, and so begemmed my critical gown. . . . Revolting details, but the love of all truth is above all prudery!

Of the *sforzando* doctor's actual discourse, that night or on the other nights I heard him, I have only a faint memory. Some sweet mush about the joys of heaven, with dogs and children playing on the grass; a long review of the life and times of King Solomon, with incidental railings against money; the orthodox arguments against ethyl alcohol, of no effect upon my thirst; high words against deacons who roll their eyes on Sunday and rob the widow on Monday; the joys of hell in detail, with not a single omitted—all the orthodox camp-meeting stuff, howled from a million stumps by Methodist dervishes since the days of Wesley, and before them by Puritans of one sort or another since the croakings of the captive in Herod's rain-barrel. Out of all this I could get nothing; it was as empty of

ideas as an editorial in the Boston *Transcript*. But away with ideas, and their pursuit. It was not by ideas that the downpouring doctor bemused those sinful veterans, and white-faced shop girls, and quaking Sunday School teachers, and staggered fat women; it was by his sheer roar and outcry. He survives in the cortex, not intellectually or visually, but purely aurally—as an astounding and benumbing noise, a riot of unearthly sound, an ear-torturing cacophony. Time and again he would have to pause for breath. Time and again he would make a megaphone of his hands to give the yell more pedal. Time and again you could see the elect in the front rows shrink and quiver beneath the gargantuan wallop of his shouts. I have fought through four wars; I have been a boiler-maker; I have heard "Fettersnot." But never have I eared such a flabbergasting caterwauling; never have I suffered such a racking of the *fenestra rotunda*. It penetrates the capital ivory like a bullet, and sets up a raging pyemia. Sunday tells the simplest anecdote with the triumphant yelp of Satan sighting another archbishop in the chute. He utters such bald words as "Yes" and "No" with all the withering passion that the Old Guard put into its naughty reply at Waterloo. In the midst of a quite banal sentence his voice flies off into a shrill falsetto, and he clubs the side of his desk as if it were the very door of hell.

No wonder the candidates down in the arena are raised to incandescence, and begin screaming to be saved! Imagine the balcony scene in "Romeo and Juliet" with Juliet bellowing like Klytämnestra in the last round of "Elektra," and Romeo howling up at her like an auctioneer, and both swinging Indian clubs, and revolving like pinwheels, and sweating like the colored waiters in a Pullman diner! Imagine "Nearer, My God, To Thee" accompanied by anvils, tom-toms, ophicleides, bass-drums and artillery, and a committee sticking pins into the tenors to make them squeal! No wonder the frontal celluloid is pierced and set afire! No wonder the devil flees in alarm, and takes refuge in

some quiet Unitarian church! . . . Losing, alackaday, not much! Robbed of very little appetizing stock! The converts, indeed, are but feeble specimens of God's handiwork. Those I saw seemed anthropoid, but no more. In all my life I have never looked into more stupid and miserable faces. At least half of the aspirants for harps were adolescent and chlorotic girls; most of the males were of the sort one finds in water-front missions and at Salvation Army Christmas dinners. Even an osteopath, glancing at the former, would have noted a deficiency in haemoglobin, a disturbance below the diaphragm and above the neck, a profound veneration for moving picture actors. Some of them seemed to be flirting with tuberculosis; many of them had heads of curious shape and eyes that did not match; nearly all looked pitifully poor and wretched and godforsaken. Of such, perhaps, are the kingdom of heaven. They, too, have immortal souls, as much so as Claude Debussy, General Carranza or the Hon. Josephus Daniels. Let us hope, at all events, that somewhere or other they will get square meals, and less work, and a chance to be care-free, and sinful, and happy.

Such is my memory of four nights of the Rev. Dr. Billy Sunday, now the emperor and pope of all our uplifters, the beyond-Gerald Stanley Lee, the super-Herbert Kaufman, the Augustine of American theology, the heir of Bryan, Dowie and Barnum. Let it stand as a review of Dr. Horn-Brown's instructive book, the which I commend to your study. Buy a couple of copies. Give one to your pastor, that honest man. But if it sets him to whooping like Sunday, then I advise you, in all charity, to have your gunmen do execution of the *lex non scripta* upon him. You will never stand such *fortissimos* —as a steady diet. Now and then, like laparotomy or mania-à-potu, a benign stimulant, but not for every Sunday! . . . I depart from the Doctor Seraphicus et Ecstaticus with a specimen of his official hymnology. The copyright is owned by his *kappelmeister*,

the Rev. Dr. Homer A. Rodeheaver (plain "Rody" to the purged), but I take a chance. So:

Do not wait until some deed of greatness
you may do,

Do not wait to shed your light afar:
To the many duties ever near you now be
true,

Brighten the corner where you are!
Brighten the corner where you are!
Some one far from harbor you may guide
across the bar,
Brighten the corner where you are!

The words, it appears, are by Miss Ina Dudley Ogdon. Ina has the gift. Let her plod at her art; she will go far.

II

Mush by the Pound.—After all, Inspiration is the safest and fattest business in the United States today. Give them the soapy platitude, the boshful burble, the rolling eye, and they will fall for it even more ecstatically than for smut. The true best-sellers are not the lingerie confections of Chambers and the Glyn, but the uplifting tomes of such astounding Poloniuses as Orison Swett Marden, Herbert Kaufman and Gerald Stanley Lee. Kaufman is the reigning king of them all in the newspapers; there is scarcely an American town of 10,000 inhabitants that doesn't devour his mellow nonsense every Sunday. But Lee seems to be the champion between covers. His books sell enormously; they are bought wholesale by "inspired millionaires" and retailed to the gaping groundlings; *Life* has solemnly pronounced his "Crowds" "the most religious book published in this country since 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'"; Prof. Richard Burton, in the *Bellman*, hails it as "greatness," and bids us take our hats off. Go read it for yourself. I hesitate to offend your piety; maybe you will like it. . . .

Lee's latest is called "We" (*Double-day-Page*), and runs to 728 pages. It is printed with limp covers, and on thin, hard paper not unlike that found in Oxford Bibles. A holy book for the plain people; a testament of sentimentality to

be carried about in the hip-pocket, and milked of its sweets in the pauses of the day's traffic. One finds in it, at a casual glance, portentous and penetrating thoughts: that the war was caused by the German's ill-treatment of their women; that "Say! Look! Listen!" are "beautiful, wistful, plaintive words"; that "all there is to self-defense is being known and being ready to be known"; that Dr. Wilson "on ordinary days" is like Abraham Lincoln on "days of stupendous wars and of tragic crises." On such rare delicacies the forward-looking feed. Such is the current philosophy of our great moral commonwealth. You will find it imitated and poll-parroted on all sides; it gets into the newspapers mixed with ditch-water. . . . I leave it to the cultural pathologists of the days to come.

III

The Tone Art.—Snowbirds in hell, Presbyterians in Paris, blondes along the Niger, musical critics in the United States! All of them who actually know what a sonata is could be numbered on the fingers of the two hands, and of these all save a few confine themselves to transient and trivial reviewing in the newspapers. As for bound books on music, we do not average one good one a year. James Huneker, in fact, has produced nearly a half of all we have printed since 1890; he is the only American musical critic who has any existence across the ocean. Henry Edward Krehbiel, the dean of the New York critics, will leave little behind him save some dreary records of performances, and a few elemental volumes for the newly cultured. His most respectable book, that on negro folksong, impresses one principally by its incompleteness; it is a creditable rough sketch, but surely no full-length work. The trouble with Krehbiel is that he mistakes mere diligence for criticism. He is an adept at accumulating facts, but he doesn't know how to write, and so his compositions are chaotic and tedious. W. J. Henderson, of the *Sun*, carries no such

handicap. He is as full of learning as Krehbiel, as his small book on early Italian opera shows, but he also wields a slippery and intriguing pen, and could be vastly entertaining if he would. Instead, he has devoted himself chiefly to manufacturing petty school-books, and one finds little of the charm of his *Sun* articles between his covers. Lawrence Gilman? The perfect type of the *dilettante* turned professor; he says much, but has little to say. Philip H. Goepp? His three volumes on the classical symphonies are pedantic and irritating. Philip Hale? His gigantic annotations and footnotes scarcely belong to criticism at all; they are musical talmudism. Beside, they are buried in the programme books of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and might as well be inscribed on the walls of Baalbec. As for Upton and other such fellows, they are merely musical chautauquans, and belong to *Ladies' Home Journal* Kultur. One of them, a Harvard *maestro* named Daniel Gregory Mason, has published a book on the orchestra in which, on separate pages, the reader is solemnly presented with pictures of first and second violins!

In view of all this paucity, such a volume as "Music After the Great War," by Carl Van Vechten (*Schirmer*), takes on a considerable importance, despite its modest size and range. This Mr. Van Vechten, I believe, hires his ears and soul to the *New York Times*, and is a prophet of the extremest heterodoxy in music. His revolt, indeed, goes so far in mad, mad daring that one hears in it the gurgle of the *vin rouge* of Greenwich Village, and abroad it would probably attract the attention of the *polizei*. For example, he lifts a scornful eyebrow to Brahms, sniffs at string quartets, and argues that the C minor symphony should be embalmed in some museum. Even Debussy begins to bore him; he has heard nothing interesting from that quarter for a long while. As for present-day Germany, he finds it a musical desert, with Arnold Schoenberg behind the bar of its only inviting *gasthaus*. Richard

Strauss? Pooh! Strauss is an exploded torpedo, a Zeppelin brought to earth, "he has nothing more to say." (Even the opening of the Alpine symphony, it would appear, is mere stick-candy.) England? Go to! Italy? Back to the barrel-organ! Spain, Holland, Scandinavia, the United States? It is to laugh, perchance to die! . . . Where, then, is the *post bellum* tone poetry to come from? According to Mr. Van Vechten, from Russia. It is the steppes of that prodigal and prodigious empire which will produce it, or, more specifically, certain of the *fauna* thereof, especially Prof. Igor Strawinsky, author of "The Nightingale" and of various revolutionary ballets. In the scores of Strawinsky, says Van Vechten, music takes a large leap forward. Here, at last, we are definitely set free from melody and harmony; the tonal fabric becomes an ineffable complex of time signatures; "all rhythms are beaten into the ears."

But is such purged thumping actually of the future? Is it really new? I have not yet heard these powerful shiverings and tremblings of M. Strawinsky, but all the same I presume to doubt it. "The ancient Greeks," says Van Vechten, "accorded rhythm a higher place than either melody or harmony." Perhaps they did, but what of it? So did the ancient Goths and Huns, the more ancient Assyrians and Dravidians. So do the modern niggers and New Yorkers. But do these admitted facts dispose of the *Wohltemperirtes Clavier*? Surely not. The simple truth is that the accentuation of mere rhythm is a proof, not of progress in music, but of a reversion to barbarism. The African savage, beating his tom-tom, is content to go no further; the American composer of popular dance music gives him eager support. But music had scarcely any existence as a civilized art until melody came to rhythm's aid, and its fruits were little save a childish prettiness until harmony began to support melody. To argue that naked rhythm, unaided by anything save a barbaric tone-color, may now supplant them and obliterate them is to argue something so absurd

that its simple statement is a sufficient answer to it.

The rise of harmony, true enough, laid open a dangerous field. Its exploration attracted meticulous and rabbinical minds; it was rigidly mapped out, in hard, geometrical lines, by dry-as-dust professors (think of Jadassohn, Prout!); in each succeeding age it tended to become unnavigable to the man of living ideas. But there were always plenty of champions ready to put the pedagogues to flight—Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner—and surely there is no lack of them today. No melodramatic rejection of melody and harmony is necessary to work such reforms as remain to be achieved. The dullest conservatory pupil has learned how to pull the nose of Goetschius; no one cares a hoot any more about the ancient laws of preparation and resolution; the rules grow so loose, indeed, that I myself begin to write tone-poems. But out of this seeming chaos new laws will inevitably arise, and though they will be much less stiff than the old ones, they will still be coherent and logical and intelligible. One needs but glance through such a book as René Lenormand's "Étude sur l'Harmonie Moderne," indeed, to see that a certain order is already showing itself, that even Debussy and Ravel and Florent Schmitt know precisely what they are about. And when the present boiling in the pot dies down, the truly great musicians will be found to be, not those who have been most extravagant, but those who have been most discreet and intelligent—those who have most skillfully engrafted what is good in the new upon what was sound in the old. Such a discreet one, I believe, is Richard Strauss—not a hollow iconoclast, as Strawinsky seems to be, but an alert and skillful musician. His music is modern enough, God knows, but he stops before it ceases to be music. One turns from a hearing of it to a reading of it with a sense of surprise at its essential simplicity and soundness. The performance reveals so many purple moments, so staggering an array of

lusciousness, so gorgeous a musical Bull Moosery, that the ear is deceived into hearing scales and chords that never were on land or sea. What the exploratory eye subsequently discovers in the score, perhaps, is no more than our stout and comfortable old friend, the highly well-born *hausfrau*, Mme. C. Dur—with a hooch of successive ninths in her afternoon *schokolade*, and a vine-leaf or two of C sharp minor or B flat major in her hair.

I thus repudiate the heresies of Prof. Van Vechten, but praise him for a brisk and stimulating little book. At all events, he has got away from the *kindergarten*. He rises above the parlor vocalist and the automatic piano-player. Let him print more.

IV.

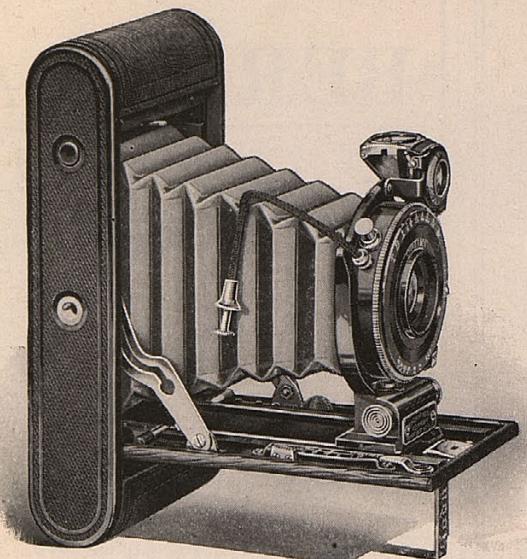
In the remaining books of the month I can find little of interest. "Nights," by Elizabeth Robins Pennall (*Lippincott*), introduces us pleasantly to intellectual society in Rome, Venice, London and Paris twenty years ago, but tells us little that is new about its lions. The book's merit is its graceful style; Mrs. Pennell writes very well. "The Challenge of the Future," by Roland G. Usher (*Houghton-Mifflin*), presents a college professor's speculations in the international politics of the future. It is suave and cocksure, but not always convincing. "Souls on Fifth," by Granville Barker (*Little-Brown*), is a sweet piece of tear-squeezing. "John Banister Tabb," by Sister Mary Paulina

(Miss M. S. Pine) (*Printed for the Georgetown Convent*) is the first accurate biography of the priest-poet and contains much new matter about him, but is marred by a too pious and gushing style. "The Best Short Stories of 1915," edited by Edward J. O'Brien (*Small-Maynard*), presents the selections of a critic who awards first honors to the story that has brought him "the most definite message of idealism."

The novels, in the main, seem to be rubbish. "The Daredevil," by Maria Thompson Daviess (*Reilly-Britton*), is the usual sentimental mush, with the war to help it out. "Hearts and Faces," by John Murray Gibbon (*Lane*), is a tale of artists and their models. "Viviette," by William J. Locke (*Lane*), is a melodrama with a sugary ending, and fortunately shorter than most of Locke's recent books. "Those Gillespies," by William J. Hopkins (*Houghton-Mifflin*), is a story of Boston, and has an air of smartness without actually saying anything or getting anywhere. "The Road to Mecca," by Florence Irwin (*Putnam*), is a chronical of social climbing. "Susan Clegg," by Anne Warner (*Little-Brown*), is a warming over of old wheezes. . . . I put aside "The Red Stain," by Achmed Abdullah (*Fly*), and "Love in Youth," by Frank Harris (*Doran*), for notice next month. Also, four or five story-books by Rupert Hughes, a very clever fellow. . . .

Now for a ham sandwich and a bottle of synthetic beer.





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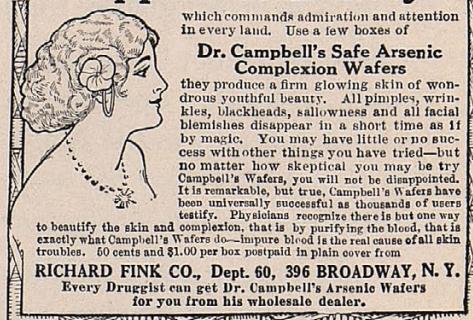
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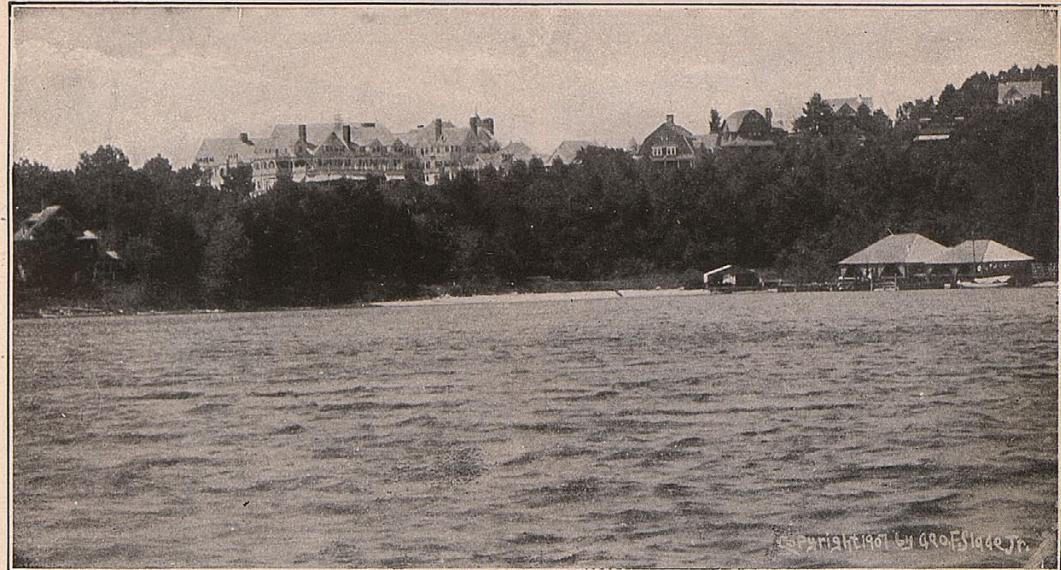
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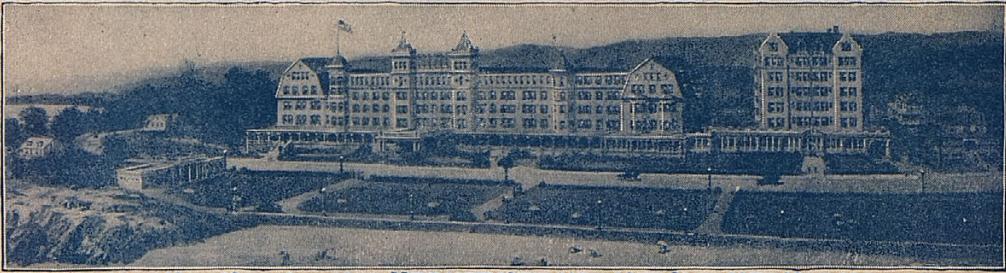
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